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DOCTRINE OF THE AGES

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GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE DOCTRINE OF THE AGES

BY ROBERT CAMERON.

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY,
NEW YORK, CHICAGO, TORONTO.
Publishers of Evangelical Literature.

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INTRODUCTION.

The substance of this book, in all of its essential features, was carefully read by the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, in manuscript. He urged its immediate publication, and consented to write an introduction to its pages. Before the closing chapters were completed he had passed away from his useful life. On this account his name has no connection with the book, further than this grateful acknowledgment of his encouraging words.

The learned Dr. Harnack, in his "History of Dogma," when speaking of the Christian's "faith in God as the father of Jesus Christ," makes the following comprehensive statement: "So far as this God is believed to be the omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth, the Christian religion includes a *knowledge* of God, of the world, and of the purpose of created things." These three spheres, then, are the proper objects of our contemplation.

Hitherto the church has studied the character

of God, and no small amount of knowledge of the world has been obtained. But "the purpose of created things"—the great end for which all things were made, and toward which they move, together with the advancing steps of the past, as recorded in *history*, and of the future, as revealed in *prophecy*—have been sadly neglected. An attempt is made by the author to revive an interest in the study of this most profound and inspiring theme. During the early days of the Church patristic literature abounds in allusions to the Ages, to their characteristics, and to their promising outcome. Then the doctrine drops out of sight, like some of the "dry streams" flowing under the sand on our western prairies. Recently it has been coming to the surface again to gladden the garden of God. The light which comes out of the truth gathering around this doctrine will be needed in the last days of perilous times, just as much as in the former days of patient endurance and triumphant martyrdom.

The quotations from scripture in this volume are for the most part taken from the Revised or Canterbury version. In a few cases the author has translated literally from the Greek

text, and all students will recognize that the renderings are simply for the purpose of making the meaning more apparent. The reader is not troubled by foot notes, directing attention to quotations from various authors.

With the fervent prayer that our gracious Lord may be pleased to use what has been written to awaken the saints to study these intensely practical truths, and to stimulate the Church to hasten the coming of the Lord who will introduce the good things of the Age to come, this book is now sent forth in His Name.

Watchword Office, Boston, Mass., January 1, 1896.

CONTENTS.

		Page.
	Introduction	3
1.	Meaning and History of the Word Aeon	9
2.	The Ages Revealed	20
3.	The Arrangement of the Ages	27
4.	The Age-Times	40
5.	Determining the Ages	50
6.	The Distinctness of the Ages	57
7.	The Characteristics of the Ages	65
8.	The Relation of the Ages	73
9.	The End of the Age	81
10.	This Age and the Next	91
11.	Judgment or Progress—Which?	102
12.	The Doctrine in History	110
13.	The Ages and the Bible	120
14.	Better or Worse	130
15.	To What End	143
16.	The Uses of the Doctrine	151
17.	The Conclusion	159

I.

THE MEANING AND HISTORY OF THE WORD AEON.

When God made a beginning with the material universe, He had a definite purpose before His mind. In infinite wisdom He fixed the end and determined the steps by which it was to be reached. Just as all of the parts of a vessel are adjusted to its keel, so all events and all Ages are adjusted to that End. Whether written or unwritten, every nation has its constitution, and every statute law is enacted and interpreted subject to its provisions. In like manner the fundamental nature of God and the ultimate end of all things expressing that nature are the unalterable constitution of the universe, and each unfolding Age is made to move in harmony with its essence. The various steps of the unfolding wisdom, love, and power of God, in His onward march toward the final consummation are called Aeons in the New Testament. It

is of the first importance that we should learn the history and meaning of this term before proceeding to discuss the doctrine which it is made to reveal.

The word *Aeon*, like the word *Kosmos*, has an interesting history. *Kosmos* originally meant ornament. It is used in this sense once in the New Testament by Peter, when speaking to the women about their dress. He urged that their adornment (*kosmos*), by plaiting their hair, or by wearing jewels of gold, or by the arrangements of gowns, ought not to be the principal beauty of Christian women, but it ought to be " that of a meek and quiet spirit which is incorruptible." From the meaning of ornament this word passed readily to that of order, on the principle that beauty is not a thing inherent in substance, but is the result of the relation or arrangement of things associated together. Pythagoras is believed to have been the first to transfer Kosmos to the sum total of the material universe. He thus expressed his sense of the beauty and order, everywhere to be traced in the material world.

The Latin word *Mundus* followed in the same path, giving Augustine an opportunity to play on the word by his frequent utterance,

"*O munde, immunde!*"—O beautiful world, destitute of beauty!

After a while, both Kosmos and Mundus came to mean, not only the material universe but the sum total of the men living in the world. In the New Testament, however, *Kosmos* is often limited to mean that part of mankind organized in unbelief, and alienated from the life of God. In other words, it means the whole of mankind outside of the Church of God.

A similar development and change may be traced in the meaning of the word *Aeon*. The primary meaning of this word in its absolute sense as given by Aristotle is, always existing. He derives it from the adverb (*aei*) always, and the participle (*oon*) being, or existing. Our word "rolling ages" is an approximation to this idea. "He hath put eternity (that is the Hebrew *olam* or the Greek *aeon*) in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end." Eccl. 3: 11. God has put the idea of eternity into the heart of man—that is, the thought of duration without beginning and without end. The incomprehensible is in the heart of man and this makes his life sol-

emn. Try as we will, stretch our imagination as far as we please, still we can not think of a beginning or of an end of time. The moment we fix it, we at once overleap it. Here lies the Hebrew *olam*, and the Greek *aeon*, in the primitive sense.

But, in struggling with the vast conception of forever, or always existing, it was manifestly too great for the minds of either Greeks or Hebrews. The Olam of the Hebrew is nearly equivalent to the Aeon of the Greek. In both nations the conception was broken up into relative periods or successions of *Aeons*, continuously emerging in a beginningless series, from the past to the endless future. This came to be the ordinary meaning of the word Aeon in the New Testament, and in quotations from the Old, it is made the equivalent of the Hebrew Olam. Both terms designate time-worlds as distinguished from space-worlds. A time-world stands for a bounded and limited time, in the midst of eternity, while a space-world stands for a globe of matter, in the immensity of space.

But in time there grew up another conception that gathered around this word. It was prevalent in the Apostolic days, although it

does not appear in literature until the close of that period.

Amongst the Greeks, there was a tendency to account for the world by natural evolution. They believed that in some way it came forth from God. But it is doubtful if they ever reached the idea of God, as existing wholly distinct from his works. They did not regard God as the Creator of the matter of the worlds, but only as the Supreme Organizer or Producer of the Kosmos from Chaos. To them, matter seems to have had an eternal existence.

All the metaphors which they employed to express this thought, assumed that there were vast grades and distances between God and the sensible world. The expression used by one group of philosophers was that of "*Aeon*," meaning thereby an emanation from God. These Aeons seem to have been somewhat similar to the Demiurge. (It is so used by Clement R. i. c. 35.61.) The Demiurge, as they taught, fashioned the material world out of the shapeless mass that came forth from the divine wisdom. According to their theory, "forms" came forth from the Supreme God, by which He made the world, and by which

He revealed Himself to the world. These forms vary in different schools, and sometimes in the same school. They were Aeons, and by some they were considered as modes of God's existence, while others looked upon these Aeons as personal substances, who came forth from God, and who remained outside of God, as separate beings. They were far above men, and yet vastly removed from God. Some schools went so far as to furnish the genealogy of the Aeons, while others regarded them as the production of Deity in a single and momentary act.

These ancient speculators regarded God as too great and lofty to be occupied with such a little thing as this world. They, therefore, introduced these emanations from God—these Aeons—as beings who formed it and ruled it. Perhaps it would be better to say that, according to their conceptions, God formed and ruled the world by means of these Aeons. In some schools of philosophy they taught that there was a Logos. But this Logos, or Word, was made up of distinct utterances, or outerances, of God, and each utterance was an Aeon. In other words, each Aeon was a part of the Logos, and a phase of God's nature,

expressing or reflecting itself in a part or phase of the world. Thus, the sum total of the Aeons would be equivalent to the Logos. It will thus be seen that a subsidiary meaning of Aeon was a Demiurge, or semi-diving being, forming the world and ruling over it for a certain period of time.

The word Aeon, therefore, had three distinct and separate meanings, although they grew out of the same soil. Its primary significance was, always existing, or forever. The magnitude of this conception led to its breaking up into periods. In Apostolic days this was its prevalent meaning. It covered the thought of time in unbroken duration, whether long or short. It stood for a period or an age, having a beginning and an end—a time-world, marked off from the eternity that has neither beginning nor end. But prior to the Apostolic age, the seeds of the Gnostic system of philosophy had taken root, and it continued to grow for two or three centuries thereafter. They used the word to designate some emanation from the Supreme God, molding the universe, and autocratically presiding over its destinies during one of these well-defined ages or periods of time. They first thought of an unbeginning

and endless succession; then of periods in this beginningless and endless succession; and then of some inferior divinity ruling over one of these periods. Aeon passed out from meaning eternity to a broken part of it, and from that to the Being who presided over one of these fragments of eternity. The reign of the Aeon over the universe during a period of time grew to be the prominent thought in the mind of the philosopher.

It is not altogether surprising to find that the word Aeon is used in this philosophic sense by Paul in the second chapter of Ephesians: " And you did He quicken when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein aforetime ye walked according to the course of this world " (*kata ton aiona tou kosmou tou tou*). They were walking according to the Aeon of this world, which Paul says is " the spirit now energizing in the sons of disobedience." In other words, Paul's thought is, that Satan is now the Aeon or the ruler of this world. Satan is the spirit—the unseen essence—the Zeit-geist of this world as now organized, moulding its purposes and determining its character. He will continue to do this until cast into the Abyss. The translators seem to

be utterly at sea here, as in other places, in their rendering of the word Aeon.

It is not admitted here that Paul sanctioned this Gnostic conception. Finding it in the Ephesian mind as he found other Gnostic theories, he took advantage of it to unfold a great truth concerning the grim fact of Satan's supremacy over men's minds. There was no Aeon corresponding to the notions of the heathen philosophers, but there was a terrible fact, everywhere acknowledged in the New Testament, and most of all by our Lord, that the Devil controls still the kingdoms of this world. Under cover of a heathen conception Paul states a Christian truth. Indeed, every use of a Greek word with a history, is substantially doing the same thing.

Very naturally the word Aeon came to have a modified meaning, designating the character or moral element in the current of the world's affairs during a given length of time. It passed out into a broader field, meaning not merely the period of time nor yet its Demiurge, but the characteristic features of any definite period. Our own words, age or times, are similarly modified. We speak of the genius of the age and spirit of the times. By this we

mean all of that floating mass of thought, feeling and opinion—all of that impulse, aim and maxim, current in the world, from which it proceeds and by which it is moulded. It is the intellectual and moral atmosphere which we inhale and of course exhale. It is that spirit which influences us, and which, when we are influenced, leads us to impart the same directing power to the age in which we live.

But it is to be remembered that the ordinary meaning of Aeon in the New Testament is age or period of time. It has a relation to eternity, similar to that which Kosmos has to space. The one marks off a well defined spot in the universe of space, and the other marks off a well defined period in the eternity of duration. The word Aeon in the Word of God, with the one exception already noted, has the uniform meaning of a period of time, having a well defined beginning, and marked by certain moral and providential characteristics which distinguish it from all other periods of time or dispensations, which may have gone before or which may follow after.

In the Scriptures it will be found that there are a number of these Aeons or Ages—what we often call dispensations—plainly revealed.

The pages of this book are devoted to a consideration of these Ages, and to the practical bearing of their characteristics and purposes upon the hopes, the conduct and the work of human life.

II.

THE AGES REVEALED.

We speak freely of the Jewish dispensation and the Christian dispensation. This is natural, as we are living in the one, and are supposed to have just emerged from the other. Our emerging, however, resembles that of the chicken that carries a portion of the shell in which it was hatched. We are in the Christian age, to be sure, but we have not grown enough to have entirely broken loose from the bondage of the Jewish. We have not gone far enough with Christ, to have lost all sight of Moses. We do not realize that Moses is dead, but Jesus is alive forevermore. It takes time to learn that we "are made dead to the law through the body of Christ that we might be for another—the One raised from the dead."

But how seldom we think or speak of any other Age except the one in which we live and the one which has just passed away. Other

Ages than that to which the Law of Moses gave certain characteristics, have come and gone and accomplished the ends for which they were introduced, and other Ages will continue to come and go, after this Age of the Church—this Christian dispensation—shall have passed away.

This may be seen by examining a few Scriptures. Take the Epistle to the Hebrews first chapter, "God having of olden time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by many portions and in many ways, hath, at the end of these days, spoken unto us in the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds." In the original it reads (*epoiesen tous aionas*) "made the ages," "who is the effulgence of His glory and the very counterpart of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins sat down." Now take the word "world" in its natural, simple significance, and see what a wonderful Scripture there is here. First we see the *end* of all history. Christ is the "heir of all things," and He will yet possess all things. That is the goal to which human history is tending, and the period

at which it will stop—" the one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." The word *clerονomos* here means legal heir—the lawful possessor. He has acquired the right by purchase as well as by appointment. And then we have secondly the *beginning* of all history. God made or planned the Ages in Jesus Christ, and the Ages begin in Him as they will terminate by placing everything in the universe in His possession. Then we have thirdly, a deeper thought. The One who existed *before all history*. He was the outshining of the glory and the imprinted counterpart of the fundamental nature of God, before all time. This is " the beginning " when the Word was with God and was God. And lastly, we have the One who exists *in the midst* of all history—" upholding all things by the word of His power " —by the utterance or outerance of his power.

We have thus presented the One who was the outshining and exact counterpart of God, before ever an Age began its course; the One in whom all the Ages were planned and made; the One who is in the midst of all the Ages, sustaining and guiding their course; and the One in whose hands all things will be placed

when these Ages shall have reached their goal. To interject "worlds" and leave out "ages" mars and confuses the whole conception of the Holy Spirit in this wonderful Scripture.

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where the triumphs of faith are celebrated, an examination of the use of this word will lead to the same conclusion. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been formed by the word of God." Here, in the Greek, the word translated "worlds" is *Aeons*. Many commentators say that the writer of the Epistle means to designate the whole of the material universe existing throughout the ages. But the verb used here (*katertisthai*), means to mend by putting together the broken threads of a rent —to repair, and thus to put in order, to adjust. It can not very well mean create, and it would scarcely seem fitting to say that God arranged, adjusted or put in order the material universe, unless we are prepared to believe in the eternity of matter. He *created* the universe while He *organized* the Ages. But this verb does most aptly express the thought that the Ages were fitted to each other by the utterance of God, just as all things were originally created by Him. The web of the moral world had

been broken by the incursion of sin, and it was knit into a succession of Ages in Christ Jesus, our Lord. All things are held together now in Him; and in the end, all things in heaven and on earth will God bring together into one combined state of unity and fellowship in Him. Literally, all things on earth and in heaven, hitherto disunited by sin, " will be brought into a head "—" will be headed up" —and united in Him. This is that mystery of the will of God, made known to us, which He arranged according to His good pleasure in Christ, reaching out towards and culminating in the fullness of times. Eph. i: 10.

It will be seen, then, that the whole of the Ages, as well as the whole of the universe are not merely an emanation from, but indeed a creation by, and a manifestation of, God. Just as no single history of a man or a dynasty can be properly understood without a knowledge of what precedes and what follows, so no Age or dispensation can be fully fathomed without a consideration of the preceding and succeeding Ages. Creation came forth at the Word of God, cosmically framed in architectural symmetry and æsthetic proportions. The *Aeons* or Ages have been ar-

ranged also, according to the divine ideal of plan and proportion. The whole sweep of the Ages and their relation and interdependence, need to be studied, in order to a true conception of the purpose, plan and infinite goodness of God.

Jesus is the first-born of all creation; "for in Him were all things created and through Him and for Him." Col. i: 15, 16. He is the divine ideal and just as the whole landscape may be seen in a globe crystal, so all things were ideally, antitypically, originally and eternally created in Him. The divine and eternal realism is the highest idealism and it underlies all things visible. He also upholds the universe for "in Him all things hold together." It is a wonderful truth that in the Son of God all creative, cosmic and dispensational fullness, as well as all spiritual and divine fullness dwells.

In the construction of a building as well as in the development of a man, there are fixed measurements that determine the relation of each part to every other. In the same way God has made the Ages in Christ Jesus, story upon story, columns on bases, and capitals on columns, until all centers in Him who is the

Origin as well as Crown and King of the Ages. The parts of a building reach completion in capstone or dome, in pinnacle or spire. The concurrent lines of the Creative ages, the Cosmic ages and the Redemptive ages all terminate and have their convergence and completion in Him who was before all things, through all things and heir of all things, and who is the Father and Fashioner of the ages. And are we not, by infinite grace, "joint-heirs with Him" in this divine destiny? Incredible though it seems, yet it is even so. If the Cherubim veil their faces and adore before the vision of glory, surely we too can join in their wonder, love and praise, in the presence of this revelation concerning the Ages, leading up to a glory eclipsing everything made known in all of the past and a glory of which we shall form a noble part.

III.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE AGES.

In Eph. iii: 11, Paul declares that he was a minister to the Gentiles to bring to light the stewardship or dispensation of the mystery, which had been hid in God from all ages; so "that now, unto principalities and powers in heavenly regions there might be made known through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." Here we have mention of a mystery, hidden in God from all the Ages till Paul's day. The mystery was that of the Church, concerning which there is not one single utterance in the whole of the Old Testament that unfolds its formation or distinct character or destiny. He, therefore, was appointed to bring to light the stewardship of this mystery, concerning which no information could be obtained from what was then known as the Sacred Scriptures. During this Church-age, bursting out like the unexpected flash of a brilliant star from an evening sky, there is

made known in some wonderful way, "the manifold wisdom of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." So says our Revised version. But the words translated eternal purpose are (*prothesin toon aioonoon*) and mean "the arrangement of the ages." Alexander Campbell translates this passage after Chrysostom "according to the predisposition of the ages," McKnight, "according to the disposition of the ages," Anderson, "according to the arrangement of the ages," and Hammond "the foredisposing of the ages." All this was in Christ, for apart from the Son the Father neither willed, nor arranged nor wrought.

We receive important hints respecting the arrangement of the Ages from this word *prothesis*, which is used seven times in the New Testament. Although generally translated "purpose" a more literal rendering would give, in every instance, a clearer conception of the thought in the mind of the writer when it is used. Its etymological meaning is to set before, to place in view, to set forth, to arrange in proper order.

Prothesis then properly means a setting forth or arrangement of anything in hand.

The *prothesis* of the Ages in Christ, in Eph. iii: 11, is that arrangement of the various Ages or dispensations which God has made in Christ Jesus our Lord, with due regard to the perfections of His own character and the highest good of His creatures. Let us examine some instances of its use.

Take Acts, xxvii: 13. Here it is translated purpose, which shows a misconception of the thought of the writer that is very striking. When the captain of the ship which carried Paul on his way to Rome, saw there was a soft wind blowing, " he supposed that he had obtained his purpose," and put out to sea. So it is translated in our Bible. But there is not one single hint about the captain's purpose in the author's mind. What was he narrating then? Just this and nothing more: the captain supposed that such conditions had been brought to pass—such an arrangement of the elements had been brought about by the Fates, or perhaps in his mind, by the Providence of God, as would make it safe and wise to weigh anchor, hoist sail and put out to sea. There was a wind blowing and this was a necessity. It was soft and from the south and these were propitious omens. Now then, these were the

conditions, the connected series of things which was obtained by the captain—the *prothesis*—that determined his action to his subsequent sorrow and to the disaster of the ship. It is not the captain's purpose, but the conditions of the wind and weather, that the author of the Acts of the Apostles has in mind—a connected series of things that lead to a purpose to sail out on the high sea.

In Rom. viii: 28, we have that comforting Scripture, " all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Would it not be better if it read, " the called according to His arrangement?" Again in Rom. ix: 11, when the apostle, in speaking of Esau and Jacob before they were born, in order " that the purpose of God according to election might stand," the same word occurs. Would it not be better—would not the thought be clearer—if it read, " in order that the arrangement of God according to election might stand?" Evidently Paul meant to say that what God had previously arranged had actually been brought to pass. God not only had a purpose, but He also fixed a certain order of things and this arrangement had been fulfilled.

In Eph. i: 11, we have these words, "according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." Here *prothesis* is again translated by the word, purpose. But the thought of the original would be better expressed and repetition avoided if rendered, "according to the arrangement of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." God is the great Architect of all events in the path of His grace. He has drawn the plans. These plans correspond to His purpose and will. He then proceeds to fill up all things in the unfolding of the Ages, according to this plan. We have here first, the counsel of His will, then the *prothesis* or arrangement of the Ages according to this counsel, and after that, the working of all things according to this design. The proprietor first wills to build, then the architect draws the working plans and after that the builder erects the structure according to the plans drawn. God is all three in one. He wills, draws the design and then "worketh all things after the counsel of His will."

The word occurs again in II Tim. i: 9, "Who saved us * * * not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and

grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." Translating this as we contend it ought to be rendered, it would be " according to His own arrangement and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the Ages." God arranged our salvation before the times of the Ages began their vast and unfolding cycles and then He brought it to pass in its season. In the same Epistle, Chap. iii: 10, Paul, says, " thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose." To the writer it seems that the translators have failed to express the mind of the Apostle by this rendering. How much stronger and more significant to say " thou didst follow my teaching, conduct and arrangement." He commended Timothy, not only for following His teaching and conduct, but also for following the whole of that orderly arrangement of matters which Paul had established in that church. It was not His purpose, but His church order and discipline that were followed.

This word is invariably used in the New Testament to express the orderly arrangement of the shew bread. The twelve loaves were set forth on the table corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. This bread

was placed on the table in two rows of six loaves each. It was the bread of *prothesis*—the bread of setting forth, the bread of presence, the bread of orderly arrangement. And this is the key to its use through the whole of the New Testament Scriptures.

Let us recur now to that extraordinary passage in the eleventh verse of the third chapter of Ephesians which has puzzled so many translators and commentators. This Scripture would become perfectly simple and transparent, if the words prothesis and Aeon were allowed to stand in their original and natural signification. It would thus mean, "according to the orderly arrangement of the Ages which God made in Christ Jesus our Lord." And this arrangement was made so as to reveal the manifold wisdom of God. It is that wisdom which, in this Age, has multiplied itself many times. It had a manifestation in every preceding Age, but in this present Age it has every possible unfolding in the Church. The light of God's wisdom is one and undivided, but having gone through the prism of the cross, it is refracted and, in the Church, it is seen in all of the distinct colors of its inherent glory. The love, the wisdom and the pur-

pose of God were unseen and unknown. According to their perfection the Ages have been arranged, and in this church period, all of their wealth has been summed up and anticipated.

An attempt is here made to bring out in English, the rich and definite meaning of this verse in Ephesians as follows: To preach unto the Gentiles the untraceable riches of Christ, and to make appear to all men what is the ministration of the mystery which has been hid away from the Ages, in God, who created all things, in order that now might be made known to the principalities and authorities in heavenly regions, through means of the Church, the varied wisdom of God in its multiplied forms, according to the arrangement of the Ages made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The many ways and times in which Aeon is used, shows the importance of the great doctrine which stands behind this term and also helps in determining the arrangement of the Ages. Our Lord distinguishes this Age from the Age to come, and the writer of the book of Hebrews speaks of certain persons who have " tasted the powers of the Age to come," —" powers of a future Age," says Canon

Westcott. And, as if to make it plain that this coming Age will be upon this earth, it is called the inhabited earth (*oikoumene*) to come. Heb. ii: 5. Again and again, our Lord as recorded in Matthew, speaks of the end or consummation of the Age, plainly leading us to expect another Age under different conditions, when " the righteous shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father." We have the time before (*pro*) the Ages, the time from (*apo*) the beginning of the Ages and the time during (*ek*) the Ages. Luke i: 7; Acts xv: 18; Tit. i: 2; II Col. i, 26; John ix: 32.

There is a great variety in the use of the word Aeon. We have in the New Testament " unto the age," " unto the ages," " unto the age of ages," " unto the ages of the ages," and also " unto all the generations of the age of the ages."

It may be impossible to define sharply the shades of meaning of these different expressions. Unto the age, may mean throughout this entire present dispensation, until the entering in of the next. John xiv: 16. Unto the ages may mean, all the way through whatever ages may yet have an unfolding, Rom. ix: 5; Rev. i: 6. Unto the age of the ages or day of

the ages may refer to that final outcome of redemption, when the will of God is done on earth as in heaven, and there is no further redemptive period to begin and to end. II Pet. iii: 18; Eph. i: 21. Unto the ages of the ages, may refer to the continuation of Creative Ages after the Redemptive Ages shall have run their full course and reached their goal. Phil. iv: 20; Rev. xxii: 5. Unto all ages, may refer to all Ages whether Redemptive, Kosmic or Creative. Jude: xxv. All the generations of the age of ages, suggests the hope of vast reproductions of the race, when some application of redemption, not now made known, has made the recurrence of sin an impossibility. These "generations" might be the process determined by "the King of the Ages," for filling the universe, during the unending series of Creative Ages, that will resume, or rather continue, their course after "the Age of Ages" shall have ushered in the fullness of the coming glory for the Church and for the world.

To put it in another form, Creative Ages existed before this present Kosmic order was ushered into existence, and also before the various stages of the progressive development of redemption began. They will also still go

on in an endless series, after the coming Kosmic order, and after the great ends of redemption are reached. There will be generations of beings during these unfathomable ages of what order, who can tell ?

Paul speaks of the "ends of the ages" coming upon the Church of his day. His singular use of the term would seem to mean that all of the former dispensations met their goal and completion in the gospel Age. All the blessing of former Ages, and all the hopes connected with the Ages to come, were gathered up and anticipated in the Age that now is. All things written aforetime were written for our learning, and all promises made concerning the time yet to come, have their fulfillment now to the faith, although not to the sight, of the born-again sons of God. It is also possible that the apostle had another thought in his mind when writing of the "ends of the ages" coming upon the believers of his day. That was the day of the crucifixion. It is certainly true that the blood of Christ is the foundation upon which all ages and dispensations rest. All Ages therefore reached along until they touched that pivotal point on which the universe poises now,

and upon which it will find its rest, unto the Ages of the Ages. Jude seems to cover the whole ground of the Ages, as thus indicated, when he says, "before all ages and now and unto all ages." In the book of Revelation this word is generally used in the plural—"unto the ages of the ages" and is translated forever and ever.

"But now once in the end of the Ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." It is now at the conclusion, the closing up together, the convergence of the Ages that Christ has appeared. Here certainly Ages are set forth which preceded the time of the accomplished redemption by our Lord. The Age before the flood, the Age from the flood to Abraham, the Patriarchal Age until Moses, and the Mosaic Age until the time of Christ, had come to their ends,—had come to their convergence. Life averaged nearly a thousand years before the flood, about three hundred after, much less in the days of Abraham, and only about seventy after the time of Moses. The Christian Age, the Millennial Age and the everlasting Ages were to follow. The Christian Age will end the week of man's toil; the one to come will

afford the temporal rest, in which this world's weary week will close in a keeping of Sabbaths; but it will not be until the triumph of resurrection and the destruction of death, that the Lord's Day of divine perfection in the activities of the new life, will usher in the eternal sphere of the saints' glory. These Scriptures seem to give us an insight into God's orderly arrangement of the infinity of time, just as He has arranged the immensity of space.

IV.

THE AGE-TIMES.

The word *Aeon*, slightly modified, appears in the form of an adjective. It is used in connection with life, punishment, fire, glory, gospel, consolation, kingdom, redemption, destruction, God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It is also used in connection with time, in a way that commands attention and sheds light upon our theme. The expressions "before age-time" (*pro chronoon aioonioon*) and also "age-times" (*chronois aiooniois*) occur, as if to indicate that there was a period in the long procession from the eternity of the past to ward the never-ending future, which does not come under the arrangement of the Ages, and that there is another period which does come under that arrangement. There is an unbeginning past. There is an unending future. Between these two extremes of the past and the future, the times of the Ages begin and end. But when

did these times of the Ages which God knit together, have their beginning, and when will they have their end?

This is not easily determined, but a hint is given in the Epistle to Titus. Paul says that God made the promise of the life of the ages (*zoe toon aioonioon*) before age-times began. Tit. i: 2-3. This life, promised before age-times, is the life which was in the Father, which was manifested in His Son, and which is imparted to all who believe on His name. I John i: 1-3. It is the life which always was and always will be—the life common to all of the Ages, and therefore is called, "the life of the Ages," or, as our Bible has it, "eternal life." Now the promise of this eternal life was made before age-time began. To whom was the promise made? Surely not to angels concerning the uncreated race of men. We have no hint of that. Was it the Father's promise to the Son? If so, it has not been revealed to us and we are scarcely warranted in presuming to enter the holy of holies of the divine counsels and, without revelation, to reason about its deliberations. Is it not better to "go by the book" and say that the promise of life was made to our own race at the very

time when life was forfeited by an act of sin? A promise was made indirectly to man, imbedded in the judgment pronounced against the serpent in Eden, before the expulsion from the garden. Gen. 3: 14-15. If this be a true assumption, then "the age-times," mentioned by Paul, must have begun their course subsequent to the entrance of sin into the world. Would it not be safe to say that the arrangement of the Ages of redemption was fixed to begin as the hope of salvation dimly sprang up in the human heart? Sin, promise of life, and then the beginning of the Ages of redemption seem to be the order.

Paul says that the mystery of the Church was kept in silence, was unuttered, during the whole period of the "age-times" of the past. Rom. 16:25. These "age-times" could not have commenced before God began to make any revelation concerning his purpose and plan of grace toward the race. Indeed, the context seems to teach that the Ages have existed during the whole period of the revelation of God to man. The dawn of revelation began immediately after the entrance of sin and may be fixed upon as the beginning of "the times of the Ages," connected with the work of re-

demption, as it concerns man, and the heavens and the earth.

Of course, this conclusion has nothing whatever to do with Creative Ages, if there have been any. The Hebrews seem to have divided all time into two periods—the pre-Messianic and the Messianic—the former coming out from eternity, and the latter passing out into eternity. The Ages began in the eternity past and roll to the eternity to come. These Ages were with them as with us, Kosmic Ages. But the creative acts of the infinite past, before Chaos was shaped into Kosmos, or the present order of things, and the cycles through which they ran their course, are not revealed unto us. Astronomy and geology reveal their periods of changes and cataclysms, of indefinite duration, during which the world passed from its inorganic to its organic condition, under the intervening and guiding hand of God. During these Ages there was motion and being and life and death. What produced death, during these creative Ages, we do not know. The account in Genesis, only has to do with our Kosmos and not with the preceding Chaos—that is with the present order of things. We only know that human death came in by sin. Of

the reason for death in the lower order of animals, we have no data for the formation of any judgment. Nor have we any means of forming a judgment respecting the Ages on Ages that passed away before man was created. The historic Bible only dates its events from the genesis of all things, and, with its reconstruction from confusion and emptiness when "the spirit of God brooded upon the waters." It passes from Creation, in beginning, clear across great cycles of changes to the period of reconstruction and completion, by one single leap. It simply states that "in beginning God created." The whole of the creative Ages, intervening between that act of bringing the universe into existence, and the creation of man, are passed over in silence. Then came the time when God made Kosmic order out of Chaotic confusion. Here begins inspired history, written by "Moses the man of God," the higher critics to the contrary notwithstanding.

The expression, "In beginning God created," is capable of two interpretations: First, it might mean "beginning," in the absolute sense, before all worlds—the "unbeginning beginning," as Augustine called it. Wisdom

seems to speak in Prov. viii: 22-31, as if the beginning was equal to everlasting. But there is another interpretation which gives to " beginning " a relative signification. In that sense it would mean the beginning of time, when the creation of matter began, when the heavens and the earth were brought into existence in their first form.

This marks the initial time-period of history. The former, is that wonderful " beginning " of the first chapter of John's Gospel when " the word was toward (*pros*) God and the Word was God." The latter, marks a period when God made a beginning in His relation to the universe, and it is the " beginning " of Moses. It was the commencement of the Kosmic Ages, which, in the plan of God, may still be in continuance, but to us they have been superseded by the Redemptive Ages, following in the path of sin. But this is not the beginning of our Kosmic days—it is not the beginning of " Day one." It is a fact worth calling to mind that most of the early church fathers took this ground, and Martin Luther drew a black line under Gen. i: 1, to separate it as an independent announcement, referring to the creation of the matter of the universe together with its

laws and forces. Between the first and second verses, ages upon ages may have passed away *after* the creation of matter and *before* the first kosmic day began. The chaos from which our world was produced may have been the fearful result of a cataclysm in which a preceding kosmic *Aeon* terminated; it may have been a world-catastrophy as the result of some preceding sin, whose end was the genesis of the new *Aeon* of kosmic order. We only know from Isaiah 45: 18, "that God created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited." God did not create the world in confusion and emptyness—"without form and void"—when it first came from His divine hand. We have then *three initial points* to be observed. There is first, "the unbeginning beginning" of John, the beginning made by God in the creation of the matter of the universe, and the beginning of the present order of things with man at the head, as made known by Moses.

But there is a prophetic Bible which also speaks. Its history reveals what we need to know of the world before the creation of man, and its prophecy reveals so much as is good for us to know of the hidden future, of the

present creation, and after it shall have passed away. Hence, this wonderful book tells of a *palingenesis*, of a re-genesis of the heavens and the earth—a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Our Lord tells of the *palingenesis*, regeneration, or new order of things, to be set in motion and established in the universe. Matth. xix: 28. Peter makes known the heat and fire out of which it will come during "the day of God." 2 Pet. iii: 10-13. John, with his eagle eye, pictures the unbounded and endless life, peace and bliss of this universe to come. Rev. xxi: 1-8.

Now, have we any means of determining when these Ages shall end? The term "age of ages" seems to indicate a period toward which all preceding Ages tended and where they will find a goal. It points to a time when the redemption work of God will have been completed and every rent, flaw and bruise in the whole creation will have been permanently healed. Then we are told of "all the generations of the age of the ages" (*pasas tas geneas tou aioonos toon aioonoon*). This pregnant expression seems to open the door for a possibility of renewals or reproductions

of generations in this everlasting Age—the fixed condition of blessing into which the heavens and earth in their final and perfected condition are to be settled by redemption. But of the nature of these "generations" we can say nothing further than to remind the thoughtful student and worshiper that life ever moves onward and upward. It will proceed by processes and laws as divinely ordained as now. No one has been able to tell, perhaps it is one of the things impossible to reveal until the "day declare it," how much of earth and how much of heaven, how little of the present flesh and blood and how much of the spiritual life is involved in the mystery of that expression. But we do know that it will never recede, but ever gratify that divine longing:

"Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

This everlasting Age will be introduced by the new heavens and the new earth, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, the new man in priestly dominion, and righteousness covering the earth so long covered with sin and wrong. This is the day toward which Peter looked in triumphant hope when ascribing glory and do-

minion and power to God in Christ unto the "Age of the Ages." When that day shall come the glory due to his name will be laid at His feet and the "former things" will have passed away forever. Lord, hasten the day!

V.

DETERMINING THE AGES.

Amongst prophetic students there has not been a complete harmony in determining the number of the Ages, and in fixing the exact time when they begin and end. The differences have largely risen from a failure to distinguish between a Kosmic and a Redemptive Age.

Time properly began with the creation of the heavens and the earth when God made a beginning. From this initial point,on to the time of the orderly separation of earth and sky, of sea and land, and the culmination of all in man, made in the image of God, we have no record of events. Viewed from the point of revelation, therefore, eternity came up to the beginning of human existence upon the earth and it was broken in its course by the beginning of time. Although the earth may have existed many millions of years and may have revolved in its orbit, yet the human race had not begun its course. Therefore, so far as man is con-

cerned in his relation to the earth, Kosmic Ages must begin with the scene in Eden.

For all practical purposes, therefore, the eternity of the past came up to the beginning of human history and we may designate that unbeginning past as an Age—the pre-temporal Age. With this assumption, we can mark off five distinct Kosmic periods. The first Age might be loosely spoken of as extending from the beginning to the fall. The second extends from the fall to the flood. The third covers the period from the flood to the second coming of the Lord. The fourth is the millennial period, extending from the second advent to the judgment of small and great before the great white throne, whether it continue one thousand or many thousands of years. The fifth begins at the terminus of the millennium and is perpetuated as "the Age of Ages," in the new heavens and the new earth, after all old things have passed away.

Every one of these Ages ends in the judgment of sin, except the last age, concerning which we have no mention of either sin or end. Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden into the earth, cursed for their sakes, at the close of the first Age. The whole world, except the

family of eight imprisoned in the ark was destroyed by water at the close of the second. The gathering, binding and burning, of the tares in apostate Christendom, the destruction of Antichrist and of that portion of the Jews that may have received him, and the judgment of the confederate nations, constitute the three-fold visitation of punishment which will close the third Age. The destructive vengeance falling upon " Gog and Magog " and the Devil who deceived them, destroying the one and casting the other " into the lake of fire," ends the fourth Age. The fifth Kosmic Age, which begins in a fixed condition of blessing established in the person and work of Christ, and having no end, has nothing said respecting it, further than to lift the curtain of revelation that we may have a glimpse of its glory.

These periods, thus indicated, mark changes in the condition of the *earth*, and are, therefore, properly Kosmic Ages. Great changes came over the Kosmic order of things when sin entered into the world. The sorrow of woman, the sweat of man, the sentence of death, and the curse of the earth, are grim witnesses to this fact. Then came the flood and its sweeping destruction. Out of this came a

world so completely changed that the Word of God speaks of "the heavens that now are" in contrast with "the world that then was." (II Pet. ii: 5, and iii: 6). God "spared not the old world," that had kosmic conditions so different from the world in which we live that human life is now only about one-tenth as long as it was then. These kosmic conditions, beginning at the flood, will continue the same until the second advent of our Lord, when "creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." The condition of things established at the advent will remain unchanged for a thousand years, and then a new earth with new heavens will emerge out of the old which shall have passed away under fervent heat and consuming fire. It is thus plain that we have had three distinct kosmic conditions of the earth, and we have the prophecy and promise of two more to follow.

Now let us go back to the third kosmic Age, extending from the Flood to the Second Advent. In this period we can not fail to observe three well-defined breaks or minor divisions. These we have already referred to as Redemptive Ages, and they are designated the Patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Church Ages

respectively. A distinct change took place in the dealings of God with man at the call of Abram. Features quite as new and distinctive were introduced by Moses and Joshua. When the Jews rejected their Messiah a greater change still was made. At that time the inauguration of the Kingdom in manifested power was postponed; "the kingdom of heaven" as a mixture of true and false confessors to the name of the absent King was introduced; and the unpromised glory of the Church, securing an election from all nations to make "the Gentiles fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel" was revealed. Eph. iii: 10–12. Whatever may be said of the saints before the time of Abraham, this testimony of Paul respecting the mystery of the Church made known to him, settles forever the fact that we who are believers in this day and age are heirs to the same inheritance, members of the same body, and partakers of the same promise, with the believers from Abraham to Christ. Nationally, the Jew has promises and a portion upon the earth into which we shall not come. Nor will those sons of Abraham who have died in faith share that

earthly distinction. They with us, and with all who before the days of Abraham died in faith, will form the one "church of the first born ones"—"the body"—through which Christ shall reign over "the inhabited earth to come." The Jew who shall be spared and saved in that day of vengeance shall inherit the earth. Those who "were of faith" amongst the living and dead of all nations shall inherit the glory of heaven.

There is no foundation whatever, for the assumption that "the Church which is His Body," is to be made up only of the believers between Pentecost and Parousia. A new body was not formed on the day of Pentecost. The fact that all Old Testament saints had divine life through faith in Christ made them members of His Body. The special revelation given to Paul,—"the mystery" revealed through him—was that believers from amongst the Gentiles, without taking a place in subordination to the Jews, as they will do in the Millennial Age to come, *are now, in this Age*, heirs to the inheritance, members of the body, and partakers of the promise, given through Abraham, to the sons of Israel. This is the new thing—Israel set aside from national

supremacy during the present gospel period, and all nations evangelized in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the next Age these national distinctions will again be resumed.

VI.

THE DISTINCTNESS OF THE AGES.

The whole of the Ages, as thus divided and subdivided, have definite and distinct characteristics, alternating like the accent in the feet of a verse. In every alternating Age, it will be found that God asserts His right and title to the earth, by giving it into the possession of His people, and in the intervening Ages, He takes His place outside of the earth, calling out a people to the privilege of fellowship with Him in this separation. In Eden, Adam was placed in full possession of its luxuriant wealth, and he was required to acknowledge the sovereignty of God by obedience. In the next Age, however, all is changed. Abel possesses nothing, neither does Seth, his successor in the path of faith. Cain has the earth. He builds its cities, makes its inventions, pushes on its civilization, constructs its instruments of pleasure, engraves his name on the whole scene and makes it a beautiful,

comfortable and cultured world, without any thought of God. The holy seed simply call the name of Jehovah upon themselves and find a grave.

When, however, the next Age opens under the new conditions, God reasserts His rights in the earth and to the earth, and gives it over to Noah for man, covenanting that there shall be a continuation of the seasons and perpetual protection from judgment by water. The days of Abram follow, and, although everything is promised, nothing is given to him. He is made the heir of the world, and, for time and eternity the world is to receive its blessing through him, but he is not permitted to possess a foot of its soil. The land is claimed by others. He never disputes that claim, but pitches his tent and erects his altar upon the face of the earth, has his bones buried in its bowels, and, as he is gathered to his fathers, he salutes the promises afar off, looking for a city of which God is the Architect and Builder.

After this comes the Age introduced by Moses and Joshua, and all is changed again. Joshua took possession of Canaan in the name of " the God of the whole earth," and claims

every hill and valley, every city and stream, every mine and mineral in the land. Here again, God is sovereign of the soil, and bears witness to His claim by placing the chosen people in the chosen land under laws and ordinances of His own appointment.

With some important changes to be noted later, this state of things remained until the days of our Lord. He came to His own things and His own people received Him not. Cast out and killed, He takes His place outside of the whole scene at the right hand of the Father and issues a heavenly call to a people having fellowship with Him in this rejected position. With Him these followers are jointly heirs to all things on earth and in heaven, yet they say nothing to "the powers that be" occupying the place which belongs *de jure* to their Lord. They simply obey and witness. They serve their Lord in a patient sense of His rejection, and "they are not ashamed of His chain." Like Abraham, they salute the promises, but unlike Him they believe they are not far off, but nigh, when in the Age to come, God will assert again His right, not to one land and one nation, but to all lands and all nations, and Jesus will be "King of

Kings and Lord of Lords." The earth will then recommence under the authority of God, delegated to His Son and our Lord. God will then assert and obtain the sovereignty over the whole earth and under the whole heavens.

Thus we see that at every alternate Age God calls His people out from the earth, and sends them back to it, while they are not of it. They belong to the ecclesia—a called out body—perpetuating a separation that ought to be as distinct, pronounced and definite as that which characterized the life and walk of its great head and Lord while upon the earth. There was nothing in common between the manger of Bethelem and the palace of Herod; there was nothing in common between Christ and Pilate, between the upper room and the throne of Cæsar. There should be nothing in common between the Body of Christ and the spirit of the world to-day.

It is fair to admit that in a certain sense God has always asserted his claim and title in and to the earth. He has not surrendered His rights—has not abdicated His throne. But during certain Ages, this fact is the characteristic feature which marks that Age, while during other periods, the call of God's people

out of the earth and apart from the organized form of society called " the world," determines its characteristic features. The rejection of Christ by the world, and a people called out from the course and coming crisis of the world—called to fellowship with Christ in His present purposes and feelings, and to fellowship with Him in His coming glory and triumph, characterize this present Age in which we live.

When the next Age begins, with as much of power and glory as this one began with weakness and shame, then will be the time for the saints to possess the kingdom and reign. In the meantime, it must needs be that the servant be as his Lord.

> " Our Lord is now rejected
> And by the world disowned,"
> We must not be accepted
> And by its honors crowned.

How can we accept honors from the world that has put our Lord to death upon the cross ?

These Ages, as thus indicated, may be called the Pre-temporal, the Antidiluvian, the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, the Christian, the Millennial and the Post-temporal Ages. There

are eight in all, beginning with the eternal "first day" of the week—the days of which are *Aeons*—and ending with "the day of the Ages" and its generations. They begin with no sin to mar the scene, and the Son sharing the glory with the Father; they end with sin banished by the work of the Son, after He has subdued all things unto Himself and delivered the sinless, deathless and foeless kingdom, back into the hands of the Father. The Pre-temporal Age was the serene Sunday of undisturbed peace in creation, but the Post-temporal Age will be the eighth day of a glory that never can be disturbed because established in redemption. The seventh Age will be the time when the Jews will keep their Sabbaths—have their rest—on the earth, about their earthly Jerusalem; but it will be the time for the "church of the first born" to have its rest in heaven, in the new Jerusalem which is above.

In the first and second Ages, as well as in the seventh and eighth, the Kosmic and Redemptive Ages cover the same periods. The time before man, and from that to the flood constitute the first two Ages in both divisions. The same is true in the Millennial and Eternal

Ages. During the third Kosmic Age, reaching from the flood to the second coming of Christ, there are four well-defined periods in the development of redemption. They extend from Noah to Abram, from Abram to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and from that to His second advent in glory. These Ages correspond to our seven days in the week, with a recurrence back again to the first, or eighth day, in which every thing is made new in resurrection power. This final eighth day will be its bridal day of glory and beauty, as the first was its birth day of possibility and promise. We are led thus to journey from the unknown Ages in the past to the "Age of Ages" in the future, but the growth from glory to glory, during that journey, will take an eternity to understand. These cycles, however, are never to be repeated. Forever and ever—"unto the Ages of Ages"—every person and every thing in heaven and on earth, will be held together, in a perfection and blessing, corresponding to the merits of its glorious representative and Head—the First born of all creation. Already Christ is "in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in

this Age but also in that which is to come." But in the purpose of God—a purpose that will be fulfilled in its season—" He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all"—literally " that filleth all things for Himself in all." As this condition of subjection to Christ is never to be changed, there can be no pagan recurrence to the beginning and no repetition of the cycles through which the universe has already passed. It is an endless series of progression, not through the evolution of self, but through the life-creating, life-sustaining and life-guiding hand of the " Father of the Ages," as our Lord is called by Isaiah. He is the " Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of the Ages, Prince of Peace."

VII.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGES.

Every Age has special features that give to it a recognized character. In Adam, before the entrance of sin, we see the perfection of creation under a delegated government, and all in sweet and unhindered fellowship with the Creator. In Adam fallen, we see grace manifested and grace promised in its most embryonic form. It is the same God in redemption, previously seen in Creation—the tree yielding seed—the woman producing a Saviour. To this grace, government in its most germinal form, and a definite line of descent for the promised Saviour, are added, in the days of Noah. To Abraham, grace and government are more fully unfolded in the family and promised to the coming nation. In the days of Moses, grace is imbedded in history and type, with the accuracy of the principles of mathematics, and the statutes for establishing, as well as the power for maintaining, govern-

ment are given, while the "law is added until the seed should come," as a "child-conductor unto Christ." This government matured under David and Solomon until it became world-wide. It was subsequently forfeited by disobedience and idolatry and both the government, and the power which maintained it, were taken away in the days of Hezekiah. They were both handed over to the Gentile nations for a limited and definite time, and given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. To this day, sovereignty of the world belongs to the Gentiles, while the poor Jew is without a country, a home, a king, or a priest. But what about the *grace* promised to, and through, Israel? That was fully and freely offered to Israel and through that nation to the whole world, but it was scornfully rejected and forfeited when our Lord was upon the earth. It was taken from them as a nation and given, as a sacred deposit, to the Church, made up of individuals from both Jews and Gentiles.

The Church is a third circle, and comes in to fill up a gap. It is not a Nation but a Body, with an unseen Head. It will continue to occupy its unique position until the heart of Israel turns to the Lord. It is made up of those who

confess Jesus as Lord, in the time of His rejection.

It thus came to pass, that when Israel and Jerusalem were set aside from their governmental supremacy in the earth, Gentile nations were called to occupy their place for a time and for a purpose. In the same way, when Israel apostatized and was set aside from being the people of God, another body was called out to witness for His truth. With this body began the history of Christendom, just as with the removal of *governmental* supremacy from Israel, began "the times of the Gentiles." With government forfeited, Gentile "times" entered upon their course, and with grace removed, Gentile "fullness" began. Israel, however, in the coming future, will have both grace and government restored to them; both of these blessings will return to them when the Lord returns the second time. It was the "second time" when Joseph made himself known to his brethern; it was the second time, that Moses succeeded in delivering Israel. It will be at the second coming that redemption will come to Jerusalem, consolation to Israel and the Kingdom of God to the world. But until that day, the hardness that has happened to

Israel as a nation will continue. The vail will remain on their heart, just as they still place it upon their faces when they read Moses, "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come." It will continue until the last Gentile is gathered into the Church by the preaching of the gospel. Rom. xi: 25–26. Their blindness or hardness only continues until "the fullness of the Gentiles" has come. It cannot, therefore, continue *after* that period—that is, after the Church Age has ended. It is still less possible that they should have their deepest darkness after the present gospel Age has closed and, therefore, after "Gentile fullness" has been reached. This scripture teaches that the blinding hand will be withdrawn, as soon as God has "gathered out of the nations, a people for His name." The blindness continues only "*until*" this election constituting "the fullness of the Gentiles" is complete and therefore it cannot possibly continue *after* the fullness is past. Israel will not, therefore, continue in blindness after "the rapture" of the Church, for with that event will end the ingathering from amongst the Gentile nations. With the end of Gentile fullness, comes the end of Israel's blindness.

The expression, "the fullness of the Gentiles" is not identical with another, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." They are often confused and their meaning obscured. "Blindness" continues in *Israel*, until Gentile fullness is reached. That is one thing. Subjugation continues in *Jerusalem* "until the times of the Gentiles" are ended. That is quite another thing. When, in the providence of God, the times of Gentile supremacy in the earth come to an end, then Jerusalem will cease to be trodden down; for the Lord will comfort His people, redeem Jerusalem, and "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

"Fullness" evidently means full number. "The fullness of the Gentiles" would imply, first of all, that the full number of the totality of nations must be evangelized *before* Israel's blindness passes away. But, secondly, it implies with equal certainty the ingathering of the totality of the elect, or the full number to be taken out of the nations as "a people for His name." It does not mean—indeed, it cannot mean—exegetically, the conversion of the nations of the world. Nor does it imply that the majority of Christendom will be re-

generate. To the contrary, it is limited to the thought of universal evangelization and the consequent salvation of the full number to be gathered out of the world.

The fulfilling of " the times of the Gentiles " conveys quite another idea. It gathers about the capital city and not about the people; it has a bearing upon Jerusalem and not upon Israel. It marks that appointed and limited time during which the Gentiles are supreme in the earth, while Israel collectively and nationally, lies prostrate beneath their dominion. It refers to the time of Gentile dominion just as the " fullness" refers to the period of world wide Evangelization by the Church. It began when sovereignty was handed over to Nebuchadnezzar and it will end when that same supremacy is restored to Israel again. Micah iv: 8; Acts i: 8. It began with a world-wide kingdom, having its center in Babylon. It will terminate when that part of the earth, once ruled by Gentile power, is again assimilated under the charm of Imperial authority. Civilization began at Babylon. Its march has steadily advanced toward the West until the extremes are meeting in the East again. When it shall have completed the circle,

reaching the point of its origin, then, under the last great Antichrist, it will reach its climax of glory and gloom, greatness and guilt, daring opposition to God, and flaming judgment from Him. Then will the God of heaven put an everlasting end to the rule and ruin, the wrong and devastation with which the "Beasts" of Gentile history, have destroyed the earth.

Some have thought that the "fullness of the Gentiles" gives promise of a time when the nations of the earth will *nominally* come into "the kingdom" in its present unmanifested condition. If so, it not only promises the conversion of the elect and the evangelization of the world, but also the universal prevalence of that unholy alliance that began with Constantine, and, in one form or another, has continued until now. But "the times of the Gentiles" has no reference to any relation which "the nations" may sustain to "the kingdom." They are periods of history, marking the subjection of a city and the dispersion of a people. There can be no doubt, however, that these two prophetic events terminate at one and the same time. The Jew began under Abraham, the Gentiles under Nebuchadnezzar many centuries

thereafter, and the Church under the Apostles, centuries later still. But they will arrive at their goal and have their crisis at the same supreme moment. Jerusalem's humiliation, Israel's blindness, the supremacy of Gentile nations, and the Church's entrance into glory all come at the same time.

It therefore follows that "the times of the Gentiles" which mark the period of their cruel supremacy in the earth and over Israel; the "fulness of the Gentiles," which indicates the completion of universal evangelization; and Israel's "blindness in part," which describes the condition of Jewish unbelief, and woe, during this whole church period, will terminate together, at the close of this present Age. This Age ends with "the harvest" at the Coming, Appearing and Revelation of our Lord. He will be literally present, He will be distinctly visible, and He will be gloriously revealed. "The heavens must receive Him until" God enters upon the work of the restitution of the all things promised by the prophets of the past. Acts iii: 21. Then, and not till then, will He come again as Lord of the Church, Messiah of Israel and King of Nations.

VIII.

THE RELATION OF THE AGES.

By the Revelation given in the Scriptures, our knowledge extends beyond the ken of science. No science has to do with anything but the phenomena of the present. But what the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the Word. For this reason we see time, connected with the unbeginning past and with the unending future of eternity. Accepting this revelation as from God, then "by faith we understand that the Ages have been articulated together by the utterance of God." (See the original of Heb. xi: 3.) Each Age fits into its predecessor and connects with its successor, and all Ages are moulded by the supreme energy of God. On his account, that which is seen (*blepomena*) hath not been made out of things which do appear (*phainomena*). The purpose and aim of this knowledge which we gain by faith, in

the revelation of God, concerning the Ages, is the abiding conviction that the things which we see about us in the world, and the Ages in which they have been unfolded, are not the result of natural causation—they do not come from previously existing materials. We learn that there is a divine power presiding over these great unfoldings of the Providence of God. Things which appear to our eyes can not give an explanation of their origin, either in the world of matter, or in the progress of the Ages. In the world before us, the thing seen does not come from what appears. The seed becomes the plant; the grub the moth; and the egg the chick. But in the Ages, by faith we know, that not blind Fate, but the all-seeing, all-loving and all-controlling God, is at the helm. The spirit is in the midst of the wheels. Both the Ages themselves and their adjustment to each other, in their historical succession, are the work of an unseen force—a force that does not appear. But at each budding point or epoch, where the old *Aeon* goes to its grave and the new *Aeon* arises from its cradle, there especially does a supernatural force intervene, directing and adjusting each to the other. This is the immediate work of God, just as

much as when, in beginning He created, and when in proceeding long cycles afterward, He called Kosmos out of Chaos. These unfoldings of the Ages are not, and cannot be, the outcome of a blind evolution without origin and without end.

It is most interesting and comforting to see how God Himself *appears* upon the scene, at every Node of this supernatural unfolding of the Ages. He comes to mold the Age which He had planned and determined from the beginning, and at the front of which He stands. At the very beginning, He created the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of them. After this, He was the voice that talked with Adam and the shekinah at "the East of the Garden of Eden." In the third Age He talked with Noah both before and after the flood. In the fourth Age of redemption, "the God of glory appeared unto Abram" and made him "the heir of the world." In the Age that followed, "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob appeared" to Moses "in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in a bush." When the sixth Age was reached God came again upon the scene in a marvelous way at the manger, in Bethlehem, at the Baptism in Jordan,

amidst the chosen three on the Mount of Transfiguration, over the multitude in Jerusalem, at the Cross on Calvary, and at the ascension into Glory.

But by faith we know that He will appear again and again, still more gloriously at the introduction of each succeeding Age. When the seventh or Sabbattic Age of Israel's rest is introduced, it will be in keeping with its *manifested* organization and its governmental power. "Clouds and great glory," "lightning from one part under heaven to the other," "the voice of the arch-angel and the trump of God," "the sign of the Son of man," "angels with a great sound of a trumpet," "revealed from heaven in flaming fire," are terms that indicate how God will again appear upon the scene at the close of the present, and the introduction of the coming, Age. When we look forward to the "Age of Ages," we see still more glorious manifestations of the presence and power of God, unfolded to our faith. That will be the Age of resurrection, of the new-beginning and of eternity. Such a glorious terminus of the world's weariness and woe, and such a beginning of unutterable glory, will have manifestations of the invisible God, com-

mensurate with its importance. "The heavens and the earth passing away with a great noise," "the great white throne and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away," "the new heavens and the new earth," "the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband," "the great voice out of the throne saying the tabernacle of God is with man and He shall dwell with them and be their God * * * and shall wipe away every tear," are terms which indicate that last unfolding of the power and glory of God in connection with the redemption of man and of his world.

We begin with the "first day" of the Ages in the eternity of the past and we end with another "first day" in the eternity of the future. But our God in Christ, who is the Father and Fashioner of the Ages, has guided to ends of glory of which no mind of man or thought of angel, could form any adequate conception. Step by step, in the long cycles of creation, the universe has ascended from inorganic matter, to teeming life, with its mastery and its mystery. Step by step, the cycles of kosmic order, broken by the intrusion

of sin, have been knit together in redemption, until the whole earth becomes a nobler Eden, into which no Satan ever comes and from which no man can ever be expelled. Step by step, the cycles of redemption have grown, advancing in the promises of love, the gifts of grace, and the protection of power. Each increase of light has more clearly revealed the ruin of the human race, and the resources of the divine Redeemer. The millennial Age clears the field and leaves man without a single adverse influence from world or Devil, in order that it may be seen, that in his "flesh dwelleth no good thing." The most daring and impious act of all the Ages is met by the most glorious manifestation of the majesty and grace of God. The new heavens, the new earth, the new Jerusalem and the new man are God's answer to it all. Utter ruin, seen in man, pride forever hidden from his eyes, and unbounded light and love revealed from God, are the crown and climax of it all. Beneath this dome, man is found in union with God by a fellowship of life, knowledge, love and power. This is the Jacob's ladder of the Ages, rising from the helplessness of man to the glory of God. It is a vast ascension from

created matter to organized life; from the earth in confusion to the earth in perfection; from man *created* in the image of God, to man *born* with the life of God, glorified in the new creation.

This is what is meant in that promise: "In the dispensation of the fullness of times, to reunite all things for himself, in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things in the earth." It is worth observing that the word translated dispensation here, is almost invariably rendered "stewardship." It is the same word used with respect to "the mystery of the church," "the stewardship of the mystery." It suggests that, just as the Church and this period of its existence, serve the interests of man and the purpose of God, so will that everlasting Age continue to do the same. Each preceding Age served the glory of God and the good of His creatures. This "Age of the Ages" will be no exception, but the highest illustration, of the rule. "His servants shall serve Him," the Age of Ages shall serve Him, and all the generations of this everlasting period shall serve Him. And when all rule and authority are subdued under Christ and handed back to the Father,—when every

person and thing in the universe are brought to *serve* the purpose of their existence, then will the kingdom have come, the will of God will be done here as in heaven, and "God will be all in all." This is the goal "in Christ" to which the whole creation moves. When it is brought under that one Head, it can never again be torn away from the throne of God, and can never again be marred by the sin of His creatures.

IX.

THE END OF THE AGE.

The term "End" as a measure of time, is used in at least three clearly defined senses in the Scriptures. It stands first of all for the whole of the New Testament period, then also for the seventieth week of Daniel, including those supplementary seventy-five days, so hard to explain, and also for the closing hours of this Age.

It may be helpful to those who have not given attention to prophetic study to call to mind here, that in Dan. ix: 24–25 "seventy weeks"—seventy sevens, "are decreed"—literally *divided*, that is, separated from the rest of time. The word translated weeks means sevens. It bears the same relation to seven that dozen does to twelve, and that decade does to ten. It is a *hebdomad*, or a seven. The context shows that *years* are meant. These seventy *hebdomads* of years—490 in all—are divided into three parts; seven,

or 49 years, sixty-two or 434 years, and one or 7 years. The first two periods have been fulfilled. The "going forth of the decree" giving authority to build, the building of Jerusalem and the "cutting off" of Messiah are past. The remaining week of years will be fulfilled when Israel is back in Jerusalem in some *national* standing. For these "*hebdomads*" concern only those periods in which God regards Israel as nationally gathered in their own city, and in which His hand is directly engaged in delivering His ancient people. Jerusalem being set aside at the crucifixion, the plans for national blessing were suspended. Their course will not be resumed until Israel shall assume a *national* existence in Jerusalem. Hence the tremendous import of the recent return of the Jews, their persecution throughout Europe and the conjoint action of the leading powers of the world in forcing western principles upon the Turkish empire. This last portion of the time separated from all the rest, for special dealing with Israel will soon be resumed. It is called "the time of the end." See the eighth, eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel for illustrations of this fact.

But to return to the New Testament period.

It is a pleasure to quote the following admirable words from Dr. Gebhardt to confirm what we have stated, that this term "the end" is applied to the present age: "Christianity is nothing and will be nothing else than the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, or the realization of the eschatology of the Hebrew prophets, throughout the whole New Testament time, till the Lord comes—and even on to the final glorification of the world." Professor Volck is more definite and to our purpose: "Since the ascension of Christ we stand in the last days, until the Lord comes." With still greater definiteness Dr. Hobart, another profound student of prophecy, says: "The whole of the New Testament time is called by the Apostles and by the Lord Himself 'the end.' It is expressly stated that at His first advent Christ appeared at the end of all preceding Ages—an 'end' to be closed up by His second advent. In this sense our whole Age, in the New Testament, is conceived of as the end of all the Ages that went before."

It is with this understanding that we are to interpret all of those New Testament passages which speak of the "end" as about to be closed. It is only "a little while" as seen from

God's point of view; and only "a little while" relatively, as compared with the time of the Ages that are past and the Ages that are yet to come. To the Apostles "the end" of this end was regarded as near. In the mind of John it was "the last hour." There was nothing to intervene in the action of God before its final close. The coming together of events in their season would open the way for the "strange work" of God to be cut short in righteousness. It was on this account that the advent was near, the Judge was standing at the door, and they were waiting and watching for certain things to "begin to come to pass," when they would "lift up their head"—unbend and lift up the head—in expectation of immediate deliverance. And this, too, is our attitude to-day, while we look at truth in the light of God and in the consciousness of the whole corporate body of which we form a part. In such a sense of corporate unity, it is our privilege in looking forward to the end to say, "then we that are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." It may not be *our* glory to be "alive" when that day comes, but we belong to a *corporate body*, having a continuity of the same life, and some of us—*some*

of the members of that body—will live to unbend and look up, and be caught up, but not before the rest of us are brought up, out of death and the grave. It was in this corporate sense that Jesus said. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." He spoke to those believers and Apostles who at that time represented the church as it will be at the time of the end. He could address these disciples of a coming hour in no other way but through the Apostles of His own day.

But we must not forget that "the time of the end" is used in a narrower and stricter sense in the prophetic Scriptures. It covers a period identical with the seventieth and unfulfilled week of Daniel. It is a period of seven years. So, while in its broad sense, it means the whole of this gospel Age, in a narrower sense it is the last seven years of the Age. But in Matthew xiii: 39, "the harvest is the end of the age." This marks that short, discriminating work, when this gospel period has been consummated, which results in the Son of man sending forth His angels to gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity, to cast them into the furnace of fire. Hence "end" may de-

fine the whole of this gospel period, or the last seven years of the period, or in a narrower sense still, the very last moments of the Age, just prior to the coming of the Lord and "*then* shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

When the Apostles, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, asked the Lord what "would be the sign of the end," they doubtless referred to this unfulfilled period of seven years foretold by Daniel xii: 19. It is a period divided into two equal parts of three and a half years each. During the first half of this "time of the end," the "two witnesses" give their solemn message in Jerusalem. In the midst of the period they are slain, and during the last half of this end-time "the great tribulation"—a time of trouble such as never was before and never will be after—will be brought to a close by the coming of the Lord. Daniel ix: 26, 27, and vii: 25, 26; also II Thes. i: 7, 8. Professor Beck, of Tubingen, in a recent article says: "The end, in its strictest sense is the last year-week of Daniel, in which the final fortunes of Israel and those of the Church, fall together (now that the Church is a fact in history) and whose definite conclu-

sion is accomplished by the return of the Lord from heaven." None of the learned students of prophesy in Germany seem to think the modern vagary of a "secret rapture" of the church, before the end-time is reached, as worthy of serious consideration. They cling to the mold of doctrine, concerning the last things which has prevailed, with uniform regularity in the whole of Christendom, until this novelty was introduced a little more than a half century ago. That mold has always been as follows: the return of Israel, the Imperial unity of a world-wide nation, the development of the Antichrist, the prevalence of the great tribulation and the coming of the Lord. Israel as a nation, empire universal, Antichrist triumphant, tribulation unparalled and then Christ appears. This is the mold of the creeds of Christendom and of the word of God.

This seems to be the "end" indicated by John in Rev., xi; 1-13. It covers the last part of the seventieth week of Daniel. Indeed the whole of Revelation from the fifth to the nineteenth chapters inclusive cover this period. With these thoughts before us, Revelation can be interpreted both in the historic and in the future sense. Like the term "end," this book may

cover either the whole gospel period, or that limited period called "the time of the end," —the last seven years of this Age immediately preceding the "coming of the Lord." Pastor Renck, another German scholar and a devoted student of prophecy, says: "Our whole *Aeon*, until the return of Christ from heaven, belongs to the end-time, as the apostles conceived it; and the Holy Spirit has given us the book of Revelation in order to set before us the things that were to come. Because of this, the study of that book is the duty of the Church and especially of the teachers of the Church in the last times. Herein lies the strength of the *historic* interpretations. At the same time, the end-period, in its narrower sense, is introduced into the book, in connection with Jewish prospects, which run parallel here, through the last year-week of Daniel,—*the fortunes of the Church and of Israel culminating together at the second coming of the Lord.*" The italics are the author's.

It should always be borne in mind, however, that the complete fulfillment of Revelation will take place at "the time of the end." There may have been a Harlot, a Beast, a False Prophet, and a Babylon in the past:—

that is, persons, places and systems that correspond to these great coming realities. Indeed, their counterpart may be in existence now. Many Protestant and some Romanist scholars think they do exist now, although they will not agree when it comes to defining which is which. But the *filling full* of these prophetic unfoldings has never come. It is yet to be seen on our earth. When the persons and sytems and cities, indicated by these terms, do appear upon the scene, then God will begin His judgments in the earth, prior to the revelation of His Son in flaming fire of vengeance, clearing the whole scene for the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." To this period—this last week of years—the book of Revelation belongs. It is the complement of the book of Hebrews. The latter shows that there is still a temple, an altar, a sacrifice and a priest; while the former shows that there is a throne, a king and a power to give him universal dominion. The one shows how grace acts secretly to the eye of faith, and the other shows how government will yet act openly, to meet the expectation of hope. In the meantime, the unceasing energy of love proclaims grace to the individual sinner, and warns the

nations in view of the coming kingdom of God. "The kingdom of heaven"—the rule of God, delegated to His Son on earth—"is at hand" now as in the days of our Lord. Hence, while we preach "the gospel of the grace of God," already come, it is also "the gospel of the kingdom of God" yet to come to the nations and to Israel; while it is "the gospel of the glory of God" to the Church in her waiting hope.

The effort of some writers to make a distinction between the "gospel of the kingdom" to be preached amongst all nations *before* the end, and "the gospel of grace" preached now, has no foundation in fact. There is only one gospel. It is the good news of grace to the guilty sinner, and the good news of glory to the toiling saint. It is the good news of a coming Kingdom of righteousness to Israel and to the nations suffering under misrule. Paul in his fervor calls it "my gospel" just as he says "my God," and yet means our gospel and our God. No, no, it is the one gospel, the only gospel, and the everlasting gospel.

X.

THIS AGE AND THE NEXT.

"Neither in this Age, nor the Age to come," said our Lord, shall the "sin against the Holy Ghost be forgiven." It is a pity our translators in the Revision did not put "age" in the text and "world" in the margin. From this hint, we learn that in the Age to follow the one in which we live, the Holy Spirit will continue to be the representative of Deity upon the earth, in the practical application of redemption to the world. This is so emphatically true that the Holy Spirit can be sinned against in the next dispensation quite as much as during this period when especially present in the believer.

In the past Age, God's election was made from one chosen nation; but in this Age He is visiting all nations to take out of them a people. At the close of this Age—or rather, at the beginning of the next—"all Israel shall be saved," and after that all nations, as nations,

shall be, not only evangelized, but also nominally and confessedly converted. God chose many out of one nation in the past, to prepare the way for choosing many out of all nations in the present. In the Age to come, He will save the whole of one nation first, in order that " the remnant " of all nations " on whom the name of the Lord is called, may be saved." In that coming Age, Israel will become the center and channel of both grace and government, with the Son of David as King of the Jews and King of the nations. After it is abundantly demonstrated that man fails to respond to grace, and is incapable of using sovereign power, in submission to the divine will, the New Man, made up of Christ as Head and the church as Body, will have both grace and government, manifested in absolute perfection, amongst all nations and over all the earth. During this present Age we see grace offered to the acceptance of all nations, but government is in the hands of Gentile nations, represented as beasts of prey, using their position for selfish ends, regardless of the will of God or the good of man. Of course there have been exceptions in the case of individual rulers, but for some sufficient reason

they are not mentioned, while the moral character of government, during "the times of the Gentiles," is pictured in this striking way in the word of God. In the Age to come, however, grace will make God's "people willing in the day of His power," and government will be in the hands of "Him whose right it is to rule." Then it will come to pass, for the first time during the Ages, that the sovereignty of the earth is in the hands of One who is infinitely good, and will desire what is best, who is infinitely wise, and will devise what is best, who is infinitely powerful, and therefore will be able to execute what is best. Then, and not until then, will government on the earth be administered according to the mind of God. Until that time comes, we must not be disappointed if the glory and power of the nations are used against, and not for God and His truth. Until then, the Colossus stands, the Beasts devour, and the Saints suffer.

But even in this coming Age, the presence of men in the flesh, will make the *perfect* kingdom of God an impossibility. God's will cannot be done on earth, by natural man, as it is done in heaven by sinless angels. Perfect government—perfect administration is

one thing, and a perfect people to be governed is quite another. Hence the promise that "He must reign *till* He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death." He begins with a saved Nation, a reigning Church, a creation delivered, a Devil cast out of the earth, and all government possessed. He begins as the warlike David and continues "until" every foe is vanquished, and then follows the rest and peace of the reign of Solomon. Sin will exist, direct interference against wrong will fall from heaven, nations will render a feigned obedience and judgments will fall upon portions of the earth not walking according to the appointments of God.

But saddest of all events in that day will be the last great exhibition of man's depravity. In spite of all the manifestations of mercy—in spite of all the interference of judgment, when Satan "is loosed for a season," he will gather together the nations "whose number is as the sand of the sea," and lead them "against the Saints and the beloved city" where the throne of His government is set in Zion. So it will be shown, that man is an incorrigable wretch and an utter failure. Tried

under conscience and without law, his course ended in the flood. Tried under covenant, conscience and incipient government, he ended in idolatry. Tried under law, separated, protected, taught by priest and prophet, he ended in the murder of the Son of God. Tried under gospel, grace, Bible light and Holy Spirit power, he ends in placing the embodiment of Satan, in the person of the Antichrist, on the thorne to be worshipped. Then, when tried with Satan cast out for a thousand years, with government in the hands of the Son of David and with the church of the first born, reigning in glory, man in the flesh—unregenerated and uncontrolled by the restraining hand of God—poor depraved man is deluded again and joins in the most God-defying rebellion in the history of the race. Israel *began* by calling white black. They declared that Jesus, the God-man, was in league with the Devil when Christ was on earth; Israel will *end* by calling black white and by declaring that the man in league with the Devil is the Messiah to be worshipped. The nations began by boasting that the greatness and glory given by God were created by man, and they will end by a daring attempt to capture, by

force, from the hand of God, that greatness and glory when it is entrusted to the keeping of His Son.

Then will come the destruction of the nations by fire coming down from heaven; the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" not included in the first resurrection; the final judgment, assigning to each his place of reward or punishment, according to his deeds; the casting of Satan "into the lake of fire unto the Ages of Ages"; and the destruction of death. Then follows the passing away of the present heavens and earth and the creation of all things new. Then will the condition of heaven be restored to earth. All things will be under the feet of the Son of God. After the descent of the "New Jerusalem" into the new earth, then here, as yonder, the kingdom will be universal and undisputed. Obedience will be as implicit, self-surrender as complete, and submission as universal on earth as in heaven. The worship will be as devout, the rule as absolute, the obedience as perfect, and the dependence as touching and tender here on this very devil-ridden, sin-cursed earth as they are now known to be in a sinless heaven.

This coming Age, however, will not reach

its climax at once. It will be one of continued conquest. It will begin with a note of victory for the "church of the first-born-ones" who will be loosed from the bonds of death and the power of the grave. The living saints will be released from the body of humiliation, changed in a moment and caught up to meet their Lord in glory, while Satan will be bound, cast down into the abyss and sealed in his prison. Then will begin the work of evangelism under new conditions, but with the old gospel, having the old power of the Holy Spirit, and the old instrument of human lips and lives achieving its old-time results, with a rapidity and an expansion, beyond our power to conceive. Then will men begin to understand with a fuller significance, many words of promise which have illuminated the path and cheered the hearts of the saints in the weary waiting of the suffering past. The personal Arrival, or more correctly the last step of the Coming, the Appearing, and the Revelation or Unveiling, of the Lord, will take place. He will come, He will be seen, He will be made known. The Refreshing, the Restitution, the Regeneration, the Resurrection, the Redemption,

the Recompense in a double sense, and the Receiving back of Israel. Wonderful words, giving promise of more wonderful things in the future. Truly the "morning cometh and the night also," but the night precedes the morning—the judgment goes before the mercy—life emerges out of death.

In that Coming Age, when all of these promises become possessions and all of this prophesy becomes history, then our Lord will become the capstone as well as the cornerstone. When all things are "put under" His feet and in His Hands, then, for the first time in the history of the Ages, will a *Man* have been found, holy enough to be entrusted with, and true enough to use that wonderful thing called authority, dominion, power, in absolute loyalty to the One from whom the power was derived. Every nation and every dynasty has used power for selfish ends, regardless of God, or of His will. But when all things are put beneath His feet, as they surely will be—when He becomes the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords, then will be found One, who will use power in obedience to the will of God, while serving the good of man.

This will be a greater test, a more searching

test, a more glorious test of the character of Christ than that of the forty days fasting in the wilderness. And He will prove equal to the stupendous issues involved. For "then will come the end when He delivers up the kingdom to God even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule, all authority and power. For He must reign until He hath put all enemies under his feet. * * * And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." Then there shall be a loud and long hallelujah in the highest heavens and to the remotest corners of the earth. As in heaven now, so on earth then, the perfect will of the everlasting God will be done. And the joy, and peace, and glory, will be as complete and lasting as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is good and great. This is the "Age of the Ages" and the "generations" of this everlasting Age will still spring up in sinless perfection and youthful vigor, but who they are and to what glory they may attain, we can not conceive now. We can only be silent and adore, while we cherish the hope that what we know not now, may be

unfolded to our admiring hearts in that day, when we see as we are seen and know as we are known.

Recently an attempt has been made to show that when Christ has subdued all power beneath His feet, he will reign a long time as Son of man. But there is no Scripture for it; no good end could be gained by it; and it would be contrary to Paul's statement that he "must reign *until*" all is subdued. He therefore cannot reign *after* that period except as the eternal Son with the Father.

Briefly, the differences between this Age and the next, are about as follows:

1. In this Age Satan hinders the truth from taking root where the gospel is preached, sends disease, has the power of death, stands in the way of the servants of Christ, and betrays them into sin. In the next, no opposition will be encountered except that which comes from the nature of man alone.

2. In this Age, government in one form or another is in the hands of Gentiles, whose principles and practice are often moulded by the malignity of the Devil. In the next, all governmental authority will be in the hands of Israel and under the control of the Jehovah-Christ.

3. In this Age, Israel is in blindness, rejecting Christ and wandering on the earth. In the next, they will be a united and converted nation of priests and kings in the earth.

4. In this Age, truth is despised, the believers are a "little flock," and the only victory granted is that given to the Master—we live through dying, conquer by being conquered, and by losing all we gain all. But in the next, truth will triumph. The agencies used, and the success granted, will bear the same relation to the past, as the 144,000 of Revelation bears to the twelve Apostles of the Gospels. Then, it was Paul to the individuals of the world, but in the "good time coming," it will be a nation to the nations that are left in the world.

But there will be the same sinful man, the same glorious gospel, the same redemption in Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same privilege of service, by word and deed as in all of the past.

XI

JUDGMENT OR PROGRESS—WHICH?

Many are looking forward for a peaceful growth of the gospel, for an advance in righteousness, for an extended application of the principles of the Kingdom of God, until the present wail of

> "Right forever on the cross,
> And wrong forever on the throne"

is completely reversed. If it were a matter of feeling, or prejudice, or opinion, then one man would have as good a right to his convictions as another. But when it is purely a matter of revelation—a matter about which the wisest man is as ignorant as the most pitiable imbecile—then every heart must stop to ask, "What saith the Scriptures? How readest thou?"

Bear in mind what has been said about the *alternating* character of the Ages. In the present Age, God is leaving man in undisputed possession. In the Age to come He will again reassert His right and title to this earth. In

every preceding Age, when this has been done, God *began* by sitting in judgment upon the scene. Noah's lordship over the earth was preceded by God declaring "that the wickedness of man was very great," and therefore He said: "I will blot out man whom I have created." Then came the flood, destroying the race at a stroke. Again when God saw that "the cup of iniquity" in the seven nations of Palestine was full, He gave them over to destruction and their land to His people. When God arises again to assert His right and title to the earth, He will repeat this process. He will begin by chastisements and these will be followed by judgments, so universal and so terrible that, unless the days of this "strange work" should be cut short in righteousness there "should no flesh be saved." If He delays and waits in long-suffering patience, as if He did not know how to bring down the blow of retribution, He will finally strike as if He did not know how to spare. The threshing floor will be thoroughly purged.

The book of Revelation, from the sixth chapter to the nineteenth, details these terrible chastisements, immediately preceding the revelation of the Lord from heaven—introducing

"the wrath of the Lamb." These chapters do not describe the development of the evil of the earth, they only give its *character* when fully matured. They do not describe the *final* execution of the just judgment of God; they only tell of the woes under seals, trumpets and vials, immediately *preceding* the final crash. "*Immediately after* the tribulation of those days," and after the darkened sun "shall the sign of the Son of man appear in heaven coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The Lord will not come before this tribulation. His own words are distinct, definite and unalterable. "Immediately *after* the tribulation" He comes with power and great glory.

Perhaps there is in the Bible no scene so picturesque, so vivid and so solemn, as that given by the prophetic statesman, Daniel, in the seventh chapter of the book bearing his name. There we see God in heaven, sitting in judgment on the whole condition of things on earth, at the close of this Age, and just previous to the sending forth of His Son to take the reins of government. Jesus is now waiting in expectation, until His foes are made a stool to His feet. In the near future, God will

undertake to deal with these foes as He did in the days of Noah and of Joshua. The sublime language of the prophet describes that scene. Listen: "I beheld till thrones were placed and One that was the Ancient of days did sit. His raiment was white as snow and the hairs of His head were as pure as wool; His throne was fiery flames and the wheels thereof burning fire. Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The judgment was set and the books were opened, because of the voice of the great words spoken. * * * I saw in the night visions, and behold there came with the clouds of heaven One like unto the Son of Man, and He came even to the Ancient of days. And there was given to Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him." This marks an Epoch in the purposes of God. It is a sublime and awful picture speedily to be inaugurated in heaven and then it will burst upon the earth. It points to the time when the "Ancient of days" shall sit in judgment, when a searching examination will be made into the moral condition of the kingdoms of "the inhabited

earth," when God, ceasing to act in grace, will impute to men their trespasses, and when Jesus Christ will be invested with the sovereignty of the whole world. After His investiture, He will come forth in great power and glory, dealing first with the "kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of God" now in mystery, then with Israel and finally with the last phase of Gentile rule in cruel despotism and daring blasphemy. After sweeping the whole scene clear by a stroke of His justice, and after binding Satan, the unseen cause of the daring evil, He will prepare the territory and begin His beneficient reign over the chosen land and over the whole earth. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He hath set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law." Thus will begin, first in heaven and then on earth, the reign of the Prince of Peace, and there will be no halt in His onward march, "Conquering and to conquer" until every foe is vanquished, and the rule of righteousness is once more supreme in the universe of God. This is what is immediately before us now.

The word of God is false or this present Age must break up in judgment. It is the

only view taken in the Bible. Iniquity abounds, evil men wax worse and worse, the Church becomes a spiritual harlot, Antichrist careers to his daring climax and the Lord comes, bringing relief to His people, and flaming fire of vengeance to the scene of willing ignorance of God, and unbelief of His gospel. What is the use of playing fast and loose with this question? Why not be brave, and honest, and face the facts, ye believers in the Word of God? As for those who prefer human speculation to divine revelation, the utopian dreams of men to the unerring teachings of God, there is nothing to be said.

No doubt, many devout souls are slow to accept these conclusions because so many Scriptures promise the triumph of truth. They are in a position exactly corresponding to the disciples in the days of our Lord. It seemed impossible to them to reconcile rejection and crucifixion with the promise of universal dominion and the reign of righteousness. But the suffering had to come to Christ as the foundation step to glory. The Church cannot be above her Head, nor the servant above his Lord. The triumph will come, but not without the judgments and sufferings that go

before. Let it once be seen, that there is an Age of victory to follow this one of vanquishing, an Age of triumph to succeed this one of trial, an Age of universal salvation to succeed this one of election, and the whole difficulty vanishes out of sight. "Distinguish the Ages and the difficulties disappear." We "taste the powers of the world to come" now. They will be realized to the full, when that coming hour bursts upon our view.

The learned Luthardt of Leipsic says: "The stadium (that is, the course marked by divine appointment) of the world-kingdoms began with the Babylonish captivity. Upon the *predicted ruin* of these kingdoms prophecy erects its hope of the future. In the Beatitudes and in the Lord's Prayer our Lord Himself has planted the same hope. In the Gospels, Epistles and the Revelation, the same hope is repeated and connected with the coming of the Lord. The extension of missions, the deepening of Apostacy at the same time, the fullness of the Gentiles, the Antichrist, the conversion of Israel, the Great Tribulation, the Advent of the Lord, all these are set before us, and the end of our Age in judgment, in the clearest manner. Culture and civiliza-

tion are good in their places, but neither is holiness or grace, and their progress and continuity can no more bring in the perfected kingdom of God in the future than in the past. The highest point of these has ever been the deepest depth of unbelief and immorality in days gone by. And just when the world is most cultivated, and most infidel, the trumpet will sound. Our Age ends in judgment and the coming of the Lord in judgment, in order to salvation. In plainest terms he tells us that the condition of the world when the end of this Age comes, will be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot, the days of Sodom and Gomorrah." This is a painful picture, but it corresponds exactly with the description given in the Word, and spoken by the Son, of God. Why cry peace, peace, when there is no peace? Why do men of God flatter man and the governments of the earth by praising a progress away from God and a rule for self? There is a coming storm in a night of unutterable woe, before the dawning of the day of righteousness and peace. O, for the days of some John the Baptist, or Luther or Knox or Edwards, to awaken the slumbering saints and to arouse the nations, made drunk with the wine of worldly ambition and material triumph.

XII.

THE DOCTRINE IN HISTORY.

The doctrine of the Ages seems to have been lost to sight after the fourth or fifth centuries. It could not very well maintain its hold upon the Christian thought and conscience without offering a constant protest against the course which a secularized Christianity, in its corporate capacity was made to take at that time. Up to the time of the Reformation nothing could be expected from men whose eyes were turned in other directions and whose minds were blinded. Either the distinctive features of this Age of gospel preaching and world-wide Evangelism, must be forgotten, or the submission to the State must be abandoned. It was forgotten and the unholy alliance was maintained.

For good reasons the Reformers did not recover this truth from Roman rubbish. Adolph Saphir says: "The Reformation had two defects. In the first place, they did not distin-

guish the dispensations. * * * If they had distinguished the dispensations of the kingdom and of the church they never could have approved of Servetus being put to death because he was a heretic, * * * for in the church there is no sword. The sword is only in the kingdom. * * * In the second place, they did not understand clearly the position of the Jews, * * * nor the second advent of our Lord, nor the difference between the church position and the position of Israel, both in the past and the future kingdom." Personal salvation they preached, and "this was the center, but all the circumference they left out—*the plan of God*, the kingdom of God, * * * the elective dispensation under Israel in its contrasts to what came afterward. The consequence was * * * the world in its philosophy and its science was constantly undermining the circumference. * * * The highest point from which the whole of Moses and the prophets, and the whole of the Gospels, Epistles and Apocalypse can be comprehended, both in their unity and their diversity, is the glorious appearing of the Great God and Saviour—Jehovah, coming to Israel to restore the kingdom to the nation—Jesus, that same

Jehovah, coming to the Church to receive the saints, that they, in heavenly places, may reign with Him." This sweeping statement about the Reformers, however, is only true in its fullest extent of those on the continent. In England, Crammer, Latimer and Ridley held to the future conversion of the Jews and interpreted the coming of the Lord literally. Luther vacillated and taught contradictory things on these matters, as is well known to the students of the Reformation.

It would be too much to expect these men to do everything. They opened the door for an understanding of the last things, although they entered not themselves. They destroyed the Lateran view of the millennium, but did not replace it by the truth of the Bible. But their greatest failure was the failure to recover the doctrine of the Ages from the errors of Rome.

Can any one doubt the blessed results that would have come to Christendom if this doctrine, together with a clear conception of this present Age and its characteristics, had been apprehended by the Reformers? The discovery of "justification by faith," lost for a thousand years, wrought wonders, but this did not and could not keep Luther from leaving the

Church still bound to the State. Nor did it prevent other great leaders from appealing to the State for the use of its power against their enemies.

It is true that Paul counselled and commanded submission because "the powers that be are ordained of God" and also because, in the interest of law and order the civil magistrate "is the minister of God * * * for good and beareth not the sword in vain, but is a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Therefore we "must needs be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake." Yes, there is nothing more true than that civil society is "an ordinance of God." But let it ever be borne in mind, that its functions *extend to civil matters only*, for the protection of civil rights, in civil relations, but never in matters spiritual. To ground the right of appeal to the State on these passages, in matters of religion, and the right of a civil power to enforce a creed or confession by civil penalties, is a manifest perversion of the Word of God. Under the false charge of treasonable purposes against the Empire, Paul appealed to Cæsar. But could he do otherwise? When accused of plotting a revolution

against the Empire, there was nothing left to him but an appeal to the tribunal competent to determine the facts. But to go to the State to uphold or enforce a creed is quite another matter.

It is not a matter of surprise that a course so unscriptural, and so contrary to the genius of the present Age, should be marked by such undesirable results. Not even does an appeal to *Church courts* and councils, under forms of judicial procedure, reach satisfactory ends. Generally the head of the saint goes to the basket, and the way of the ungodly rules the day. The One who is to reign in righteousness has not yet come to preside over the courts of the Church, much less over the counsels of the State.

In the murder of the Nazarene, no appeal was made but to the God of justice. The martyrdom of Apostles, Evangelists and Pastors, as well as millions of Christians, in the early centuries, never suggested an appeal to the State or to the sword. These thoughts came in with the apostacy, when the mantle of Christ was thrown over the men of the world. Then it came to pass, that the professed Christians, who stepped into the seat of

power, turned the artillery of the state against the true followers of Christ, whose creed did not square with their own. Pagan on the throne or off the throne, Christ and His followers were ever on the cross. The professed Church, assuming the functions of the state, became possessed by the spirit of the State. She forsook her Lord and lost His Spirit. She gave her affections to His enemy, and be came the channel of His enemies' hatred tc the church.

Dr. Kleiforth, of Schwerin, Germany, the greatest student of the last things in Europe says; " It was not until the Age next following the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, that the church was aroused to a deeper study of the future, for the kingdom of God on earth. It was then that she grasped first of all the pathway of development which the kingdom of God in the form of the Christian Church must take along the Ages, until the final goal of its consummation. It was the Reformation which, reacting against Rome, and setting out from the standpoint of the sole, supreme infallibility of the Word of God, first opened the door, in modern times, to the wider study of eschatology. The result of all

is that now in our time, this branch of Biblical study has acquired for itself an independent position, and a firm exegetical grounding which nothing can disturb, although even yet a large body of Christian teachers seem unacquainted with this fact and continue to woefully neglect the prophetic word."

The Reformers did not always go back to the foundation of things in these matters. Had they come out from Rome's determination to rule in an Age when Christ was content to be crucified, how different had history been. What wars and woes, what prostitution of the Church of God to the caprices of the Cæsars, what lapses and what pitiable weaknesses would have been avoided had these servants of God come to understand the special features of this Age of Messiah's rejection and Israel's blindness, of the Churches' calling and the Gentile's dominion. And even until to-day, throughout the whole of Europe, the professed Church is under the control of nations still molded by the spirit of Satan. And if the whole truth must be confessed, this is more emphatically true in Protestant England and Germany than in Patriarchal Russia and Papal Italy. Although America has no formal union of

Church and State, yet do not her Christian teachers go contrary to their complete separation when appealing as churches to the State for the enactment of laws to aid in the maintenance of her principles? Is it right to throw the conscience of the Church over the conduct of the State? Is the work of the one so identical with that of the other that the same principles must govern in both? If so, in what do Protestants differ from Romanists, except in this, that *they* assume to be, by divine right, the keepers of the nation's conscience while they deny this position to the Papal hierarchy.

The gifted Ludthardt of Leipsic, an author well known to American students, has expressed himself freely on the study of prophetic truth. He says: "The progress of the Church since the Reformation, demands corresponding progress in prophetic study. Theology is not something accidental or unnecessary, but essential for our Age. Its development stands under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So must also the development of study in the prophetic Word. Therefore, now, are the churches' eyes directed to the future more earnestly than ever before; to the

true sense of prophecy as against the false lures of independent and unskillful sects, on the one hand, and the false conceptions in the Church on the other. The Reformation did much to open the way for a better understanding of the Word of God, in reference to the great doctrines of salvation. But Luther and his reformers had not the call, therefore not the possibility nor opportunity to attain to the correct knowledge of the last things in their relation to the kingdom, that we have in our day. Their call was to establish forever the certainty of salvation by justifying faith alone. Different problems are given of God to be solved by the Church at different times, and ours is the doctrine of Eschatology, as a legitimate consequence of the doctrine of justification by faith. No man will maintain that this branch of study has received the same adequate attention which the Church has given to the study of theology."

Again the same author says: "Anthropology, Christolgy, and Soteriology—in these, great progress was made in the Reformation, but it is certain that progress in one development of study necessitates progress in every other—for the truth is one—an organism,

And eschatology is of the greatest practical importance for the church, in the conflict with the world."

Surely the time has come for devout scholars, and enlightened exegetes, to give a patient examination of the teachings of Scripture respecting the things about to come to pass. It has been left in America, for the most part, to men who are neither fitted by scholarship nor by a pious reverence for the Word of God, to unfold these great things for the guidance of the Church.

XIII.

THE AGES AND THE BIBLE.

St. Augustine says: "Distinguish the Ages and the Scriptures will harmonize." Nothing exceeds the importance of this fact in the study of the Bible. Unless the principle of progress that underlies the doctrine of the Ages is understood, little advance can be made in a broad and comprehensive interpretation of the Word of God. Schopenhaur says: "A work consisting of one idea, however comprehensive, must possess perfect unity. It may consist of parts, but they must be organically connected, so that each part supports the whole and is supported by the whole. The whole is illustrated by every minute part, and even the smallest part cannot be understood unless the whole has been comprehended."

The Bible is constructed on that principle. It is pervaded by one idea, and this, in some sense, is in every part. The end explains the beginning, and the smallest parts are illumin-

ated by the whole. The beginning presupposes the end, as the end does the beginning. The One who inspired the first chapter of Genesis saw the truths of the last three chapters of Revelation. This book cannot be treated as mere literature. It is the instruction given by God to His people, with a full knowledge of all the Ages, and in accordance with the characteristics of the Age in which they lived. The first part of that Revelation contains, in germ, everything that was afterward unfolded. Of none of the books of the Scriptures can it be said this is simply historic, or lyric, or prophetic; but all of these books are pervaded by the one main principle, inwrought with the same harmony visible in every living organism. The whole Book, whether in history or in song, in teaching or prophecy, culminates in the last, the Revelation—that book which, in the last days, will become what it was in the first days of the Church—the best-beloved and most-studied of the whole—"the revelation of Jesus, which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants."

Dr. Kleiforth says: "While it is true that there never has been a time when the Church has forgotten the hope of the future, although

she viewed it variously, and often erroneously, it is also true that since the first Age of the Church, when she was predominately eschatalogical, there has never been a time when she has made eschatology the middle point on which her thought has been concentrated. Theology, Christology, Anthropology, Soteriology, all these circles of doctrinal study, have each in turn been the middle point of her thinking and her movement amid great crises and struggles for the truth. Rather, save the consideration of death, resurrection, judgment and eternity, in relation to the *individual*, the whole subject of the 'last things' in relation to the kingdom of God and the outcome of the Ages has been regarded as of secondary importance, or if touched upon at all, it has been viewed more as a brief appendix to the body of the doctrine. * * * But it will not and cannot remain neglected. In face of the false doctrine so rife in our times, that the world goes on independently by its own laws, in a course of natural evolution, by means of culture and civilization, philosophical enlightenment and scientific progress, to reach the 'golden age' —and that the Church will expand herself to a world-wide and only religion on earth—the

truth of the Bible must assert itself, and condemn the false speculation, unless the Bible itself is discarded for human schemes and opinions. The 'progress' of all other branches of Biblical study demands and will compel progress in this also."

A well-known scientist who has recently died says: "The beginning and the end of things is absolutely hidden to science." It deals only with phenomena, but the beginning and ending of things are beyond its view. The same is true of the history of man. But by Revelation we go back beyond history, and forward into the future, and learn its end. Ranke, the great historian has frankly said of Gen. x, "There is something here different from all other history—all the tribes of the earth are related to one another by their common descent from Shem, Ham and Japhet." Only in this book do we learn that the race is a unit and all nations brothers.

From this book alone the true idea of history is learned, that the human race is one, and that events succeed each other with a constant tendency toward some definite end. Hence the chronicler of events has passed away, and the historian has taken up the tale

of those nations and events that stand in vital connection with the stream of history, and which contribute something to the ends attained.

This unity of purpose runs through all prophecy. The prophetic Scriptures are but a development of Baalam's great prediction. In the utterances of Baalam and the symbols of Daniel the ground-lines and predetermined epochs of history, down to the second coming of Christ are clearly imbedded. Every prophetic utterance from the song of Moses to the visions of the Apocalypse, is constructed on this plan. The prophet looks through one Age into another. Hence, he who does not understand the Ages can neither read the history nor the prophecy of the Old and New Testament with intelligence. The study of the Scriptures and of Theology, apart from the unfolding of the prophetic doctrine of the Ages, is the omission of the only factor that can give unity and consistency to the truth of God. No satisfactory results can come from it; it is the merest child's play. One might as well attempt the construction of a ship without a keel, as to formulate a systematic statement of truth, without including the doc-

trine of the Ages. John Locke, the philosopher, was a devout student of Scripture. He had an apprehension of the importance of a connected view of God's progressive unfolding of Redemption. He says: "All these dispensations in the several Ages of the Church, were all by the preordination of God's purpose, regulated and constituted in Christ Jesus our Lord." We study the world created by God, we adore Him for the riches of grace accomplished in redemption, but has He not planned the Ages and filled them by the wonders of His love and power? Shall we ignore these Ages and omit the study of what God has done and is doing, in the processes of their development? The world was created by the Word of God, and it became the scene where redemption was finished by the Son of God, but the *long and ever unfolding Ages*, are the successive steps of progress in applying that divine undertaking to man and to his world. Just as the seed bursts into life, producing "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear," so have the Ages grown, and so will they continue to grow, until "in the dispensation of the fullness of times," they culminate in unmarred perfection.

If *all* Scripture is divinely inspired and profitable, then *all* Scripture ought to be studied. Becoming modesty, to say nothing of reverential obedience, should lead Christian teachers to feel that they are not fully equipped for the great work committed to their care until they have mastered in some measure the things that have been revealed. Whatever may be said in favor of the study of dogmatic or prophetic Scripture, applies with increasing urgency to what is revealed concerning the age-steps in redeeming work. A large part of the Bible is prophetic, and all we enjoy to-day came in the fulfillment of prophecy. And yet how the Scriptures of the prophets are neglected. Some teachers even dare to discourage the study of this truth, unconsciously using the plea of Romanists, that it is dangerous and useless. Can that be right in the Protestant which is wrong in the Papist? What an impertinence to undervalue that to which God has attached so much importance. What presumption to undertake the leadership of a flock of God without a knowledge of *all* Scriptures, given "that the man of God may be perfectly furnished." How can the soldier be perfectly equipped when he lays aside part

of his armor? Remember it is of prophetic Scripture that God says, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed in your hearts until the day dawn and the day star arise." Every other light is but an *ignis fatuus*—a "will o' the wisp"—in the midst of the grave difficulties which now face both Church and State, Christian and unbeliever, in these portentous times.

It is not too much to say, that without an understanding of the truth that gathers about the dispensations, the difficulties in the way of interpreting the Scriptures are almost insuperable. As well might one think of gaining a clear knowledge of the human body when ignoring the vertebræ, the alimentary system and the voluntary and sensitive nerves, as to attempt to arrange the great principles of the Scriptures in their relations and due proportions without a recognition of the doctrine of the Ages. Every ship has a keel, every body has a backbone, and every nation, either in writing or tradition, has a constitution. Confusion comes from ignoring these facts. There is system everywhere. God, in beginning His relation with the universe, was not moved by a blind impulse without definite aim. He had his own counsels, He made His plans to

meet His purpose, and He is filling in the Ages according to the "working drawings." All who ignore these great facts—these arrangements of the Ages—will make "confusion worse confounded." They will be blind as to the character of the judgments, and indifferent as to the great hope of the Church in the coming of the Lord. They will take truth, given to the Jews, and applicable to them alone, and divert it to the Church, thus changing the very object of prophecy. They will draw arguments and analogies from the state of the Jews when God was their king, to apply them to nations now when sovereignity is committed to their trust under vastly differing circumstances. They will take the blessedness belonging to Jerusalem in the "Age to come" and so pervert it to the "present Age" as to flatter and deceive the nations that are soon to be cut off by the terrible judgments of God. Indeed Christians inside of the Church have plundered the Jews of their spiritual things with as much cruelty and as little conscience as the professed Christians in the nations have plundered them of their earthly things. And the distortion, misapplication and cruel confu-

sion of the truth of God is due to the prevailing ignorance respecting dispensational arrangements more than to any other cause.

XIV.

BETTER OR WORSE.

The question is often asked, "Is the world getting better or worse?" This might be answered in many ways according to what is meant. Does it mean physically, politically, socially, morally, spiritually or religiously? To the honest inquirer this does not have any bearing on railroads, steamboats, telegraphs, schools, universities and civil administration. The meaning is this: Is the world as a world in general, morally, spiritually and religiously superior in its life, manners, maxims—in its personal and private relations—in its public principles and commercial conduct—in its discharge of the duties of veneration and love, such as the love of children for parents and of pupils for teachers—in its special duties of fidelity between husband and wife, of purity between the sexes, of temperance, of obedience to law and order, of respect for human life, of hatred for blood-shedding and scenes of brutal-

ity, of political honesty and public righteousness, and of personal repentence toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus—is the world thus viewed when subjected to honest inquiry, better relatively and absolutely, than it has been at any one time during the last 1800 years? Is it better or worse, since the beginning of the gospel Age?

The question can only be answered truthfully by a specification of given nations and by a comparison of different periods in their existence. For example, was Rome, during the first 500 years of her existence better or worse than in the times of Augustus in the splendor of her civilization? During the first 500 years divorce was unknown, justice and morality were identified in the courts, conscience was the ground of law, the gods were venerated, and the relation of parents and children was one of natural piety. But when we come to the days of Cæsar, Cicero says there was "nothing left but the dregs of Romulus." Hence the ease with which that general crossed the Rubicon and became the emperor of the world. Can there be any doubt as to what answer should be given here? Was Rome better or worse in the days of

Brutus than in the days of Regulus? Read Horace and then doubt who can !

But it is said " Christianity has come to make the world better." Not quite. The world is the better for the coming of Christ, but that was not the purpose of His coming. The irrigating ditch is made to convey water to the grain growing out on the broad acres, and not for enriching the soil through which it passes. There will be seepage, growth and enrichment all along its course, but that was not the purpose of its construction. The advent of the Son of God, has been a blessing in percolating to and through unregenerated humanity. But He came for a higher purpose than such a mere pittance of uplifting. The world had apostatized. He came to bring it back from rebellion to loyalty, and from death to life—to a place where a repetition of this awful apostacy is an impossibily. He is doing this now. He took many out of one nation in the past, that He might take many out of all nations in the present. He saves one by one now, and makes the saved one a savior of others. He will save a wole nation in the period to come and then use that nation to reach the whole world.

It is never said that Jesus came to make the

world better. It would have been a pity if it had been so. Even now, would not many be driven to the salvation and sunshine of Christ if the world had not so many delectable things for its gratification? It was Cain who tried to make the world better and to obliterate the marks of its curse, by building cities, making inventions and constructing instruments of music. Seth and his descendants died, looking for a portion in the new earth to come. The citizens of Ur, the Hittites of Canaan and the master builders of Egypt sought to make the world better, but Abraham walked through it as a pilgrim looking for "a city of which God was Architect and Builder." Making the world better is too insignificant, too material, and too narrow a conception of the mission of Christ. The purpose of the mission of Christ covers the whole nature of man, it answers to the whole character of God, and comprehends the complete re-beginning of the world in which we live and the heading up of the universe of mind and matter into a state of blessedness as perfect and lasting as the character of God. *Not better, but best*, is the purpose set before the heart of Christ in His relation with mankind and the universe.

Of course benedictions have followed in the wake of Christianity. "The river of God is very full of water," and there has been a generous percolation through the nations even where there has not been a regeneration of men. Paganism and its superstition have disappeared; new faiths, a new manner of life and new hopes have sprung up; the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the slavery and the barbarism of Rome have passed away and the foundations of civil society have been re-laid. The Ten Commandments, and the Sermon on the Mount have been put into modern laws superseding the code of Theodosius. All this is true, but the day of fatal mistake came to the Church. The Church of the despised Nazarene was deceived and led to put on the purple of the Cæsars. After three hundred years of holy separation, faithful testimony and noble martyrdom, it came to the throne. While the Church proved true under the frown of persecution, it failed and fell before the smile of favor and the promise of power. It apostatized from Christ and ascended the throne of the world. It consented to reign where Christ was excluded. It ceased to be the betrothed Virgin of the Lord, and became the

Harlot of the State. In keeping with this conduct, the prison, the fire and the wild beasts of persecution, once directed against the Church by Pagan Rome, were now turned against every dissenting Saint by Papal Rome. Now, it is pertinent to ask whether this herd of ruling cut-throats, bearing the name of the Nazarene, were any better than the Cæsars of the days of Apostles? Was the Church better in the brilliant days of Hildebrand than in the humble days of Paul? There was greater wealth, there were more magnificent buildings and a larger number of nominal Christians under Hildebrand, but there was also a corruption of doctrine and a rottenness of life that beggar description.

After this came the darkness of the "Middle ages" during which, as Bolingbrook says, "the annals of Christendom were the annals of hell." Then came the breach from Rome in the days of the Reformation. In quick succession came Protestantism as a political power, the spread of infidelity, the French Revolution, followed by the era of modern revolution, bloodshed, greed, enormous wealth, corruption in every quarter, education prevalent, and, both within and without the Church,

socialism, communism, criticism and denial of the supernatural.

"But we have missions to the heathen." Yes, and alcohol and opium by the million added, to increase the gold that goes to the maw of the modern monster of mammon? Missions at home and missions abroad, with degrading saloons, debauching theaters, barbaric brothels and shameless and nameless sins, to aid the missions of the Devil. Comparison in one item alone is sufficient. Last year, less than fifteen millions of dollars were given by the whole world of Christians to the cause of Missions, while one billion of dollars were spent on alcohol alone: one dollar to save the heathen and six hundred and sixty-six to destroy the world. And the condition of the large cities of Christendom is appalling,—London, Paris, New York, Chicago, Berlin and Rome reeking and steaming to heaven with their moral miasma and all beyond the control of Church or State! No wonder that ministers who do not look out over the coming Ages, drop into despair and turn politicians as a last resort, with the vain hope of regenerating society by law. After candidly considering these things, then ask if the world is better

or worse—if the Church is better or worse than at the beginning of the Christian era ?

There can be but one answer to the question. That answer corresponds to the whole course of this Age given in the 24th of Matthew by our Lord Himself. Wars, famines and pestilence are *common to the whole Age*, but abounding iniquity, waning love, and " great tribulation such as hath not been since the beginning of the world " *close the clouded scene.* The same is taught by Paul declaring to the Thessalonians, that the Lord would not come, closing this Age and inaugurating another, " until the falling away * * * and the Man of Sin, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or is an object of worship." Interpret the Revelation as you may, the same is unfolded under the seals, trumpets and vials. Indeed, from all that is revealed, and from all which the past projects into the future, the sum of our conclusion is, that this Age, in spite of gospel and government, in spite of culture and civilization, grows so much worse, that, like all preceding Ages, it will come to its end because of the *predominance of the evil from within its own bosom.*

As well might men, in their senses, deny that the sun shines, as for those who believe in the Bible and who profess subjection to its teachings, deny this sad fact concerning the end of our Age. And toward this end we are moving with startling rapidity. The learned Mr. Klieforth is here quoted with pleasure: "The cry of 'pessimism' amounts to nothing, except to reveal the prejudice or ignorance of those who make it. According to the Word of God, there is no 'golden age' as a product of historical Church-development, or world culture, before the Lord comes. The view is *fundamentally false* and opposed to the Word of God. It rests upon a false ground, viz: the *identification* of the *inner life* of the Church with *outward extension*, and its consequences have been fatal to the true life and mission of the Church. It is deceiving. According to the Word of God the outcome of the Church in this Age is a great apostacy, through which Christianity itself is forced back into great tribulation." These are strong, brave words from a profound student of prophetic truth. He gives a true picture of the inevitable future, soon to be faced in the vaunted progress of the course of Christendom.

But there is a deception lurking in this cunning question. The "World," the "Church" and "the Age" differ from each other. Under the term "World" it is impossible to consider the condition of the Church or the trend of the Age. It must be admitted that a world with improvements in industries, in methods of travel and means of education, is a better world to live in than a world without them. But what is meant by better? Better to enjoy life? Yes. Better in morals? Where is the proof? In London exposures, or Chicago shame? But why not ask, is the Age getting better? Is the Church getting better? Do both increase in knowledge of the Word, and obedience to the Will of God? If both are developing in that direction, and if by persistence in their evolution they will surely advance to the "golden age," then let us settle the matter on that basis and throw to the winds the teachings of the prophets, of Christ, and of the Apostles. For, all of those foretell another and a different state of things. Having done this, let us throw the reins upon the neck of our imagination and cheer loudly for modern speculation and progress. That is precisely what the "higher critics" are doing to-

day. They deny that the prophets of old foretold events that have been fulfilled. They were limited by the horizon of their own times. They spoke to the men of their day but had no supernatural insight into the future. On this account they deny the date of Daniel, and with impious nonchalance say, "Jesus did not have the data for a correct opinion—He did not know." So they repudiate the claim that the Scriptures have any forecastings of the future. Such an admission would be fatal to their falsehoods, and destructive to their standing upon the ground of the lowest materialism. If the prophets truly and really did foretell events, known to God alone, then their theories and hopes go to the winds.

But is the world no better? It would be strange indeed if the world were not better in some aspects because of the presence of Christian truth. And it would be equally strange if the Church, by her contact with the world had not been made the worse. But on the whole, the Age in which we live, because of the union of Church and State, because of departure from the simplicity of Christ and the Apostles, because of the deceptions of Satan still unbound, and above all, because of the abuse of

gracious privilege and the rejection precious truth is deteriorating and ripening for coming judgment. It will begin at the House of God, and never end until the field is purged with fan and flame.

We take the following quotations from men who make no pretensions to veneration for the Word of God, but who seem not to share the modern infatuation of maintaining that the present tendency of things is upward and not downward. The prophetic Scriptures settle everything to the obedient servant of God. But all men are not obedient. The claims of vain men, and of their science and scholarship, share the affections and allegiance of many of the family of God. It is still "an adulterous generation"—spiritually unclean, because of disloyalty to the Lord in matters of faith and walk. Hence we give place to the following quotations, in the hope that some may be moved to thought, and awakened to feeling, who disregard the prophetic utterances of the Scriptures. Kidd says: "Man, left to himself has not the slightest tendency to make any onward progress. If man was allowed to follow his own inclinations the average of one generation would always tend

to sink below the average of the preceding." Max Nordeau in his recent remarkable book on Degeneration says: "At no time known to me were there, in addition to mere brutality and lewdness, so many symptoms of organic ruin observable as now—degeneration is more applicable to our times than to previous epochs." He also speaks strongly of the "increased rate of insanity, imbecility, idiocy and impulsive crimes" and of the "unraveling of all moral bonds, unsparing egotism, sensualism and brutality." It is worthy of note that several months before the disgusting disclosures of a depravity unsurpassed in the days of Sodom, this author as a mere man of the world declared that the literature, art and culture (*sic*) of Europe, indicated the very depravity that so soon afterward shocked the sensibilities of all right thinking people. Was Carlyle right or wrong when he said "optimism is a fool's way of looking at things?"

XV.

TO WHAT END?

Our race is moving on. We know its origin, what is its end? Whither are we drifting? No one willingly takes passage in a vessel without knowing to what port she sails. To what port is our race sailing? Can we know? Science and history, as we have seen, cannot help us. The beginning and ending of things are hidden from both of these alike. But the Bible is bold in its revelation of the origin and end of man, and of the nations. Paul an Mars Hill declared that "God had made of one blood all the nations * * * that he had determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation, and had appointed a day in which he would judge the inhabited earth." Here is origin and end. God created the race, it is a unit, the nations are the outgrowth of his purpose, and their chronology, geography and teleology—their

time, place and end—are determined by his decree.

In the future, events gather around three distinct circles. Both Old and New Testaments follow two of these circles now existing on the earth. The one is that "remnant," called the "Jews." The other is that line of dominion over the earth, commencing in Babylon and culminating in Rome, and destined to have its final form where the race began, in universal empire. "Westward the star of empire" has taken its way. When the circle is completed, then years will be lived in days, and side by side will grow the ripest good and the most malignant evil, culminating in the climax of grace and judgment.

When we confine our attention to the New Testament, a third circle is added, in the Church of God, having an *outward* form as "the kingdom of heaven" or Christendom. Out of this is taken, at the end, all things that offend, and the judgment extends through the other circles of Jew and Gentile, until the work is complete.

It is most important to see these things that we may "give no offence to the Jew, to the Gentile nor to the Church of God." From Baby-

lon to the second Advent, there stretches down through history but *one* governmental Age. God has made no change in His dealings with the nations, since the days of Nebuchadnezzar. This governmental period is called " the times of the Gentiles " by our Lord. It begins with the Old Testament Babylon, and will only end with the Babylon of the New. The old Babylon gradually faded from sight, but the Baby lon of the immediate future, will sink like a stone under the last vial of the outpoured judgments of God.

The Gentile nations, as nations, filling up this period, when estimated by the searching eye of God, constantly deteriorate. God looks at the heart; man at the face; God at the character, man at the appearance. Here is the description of the line of descent as given by God: " Lion, bear, leopard and a fourth beast terrible and dreadful." That is one picture. Here is another: " Gold, silver, brass, iron and a mixture of iron and clay." Here we see the *progress* we are making according to the mind of God—a progress backward—a deteriorating advance. From the kingly lion we descend to the nameless beast, and from the precious gold to the dishonorable

clay. This, of course, does not refer to the Church, or the Age, but to the nations represented by these symbols. A nation may advance in civilization and decline in morals. Greece and Rome reached their pinnacle of civilization and their abyss of immorality at one and the same moment. Their path to glory proved to be their path to shame. They perished in their civilization, not only in spite of it, but really because of it. Recent revelations in London and other great centers, point to the speedy approach of a similar anti-climax in our Saxon civilization.

Oh, how hard it is to learn that God takes no delight in large cities, in costly buildings of great architectural beauty, immense armies, enormous fortunes, brilliant literature, the perfection of art and the acme of polished manners. What He desires, first of all, is men who will own and honor His Son in this apostate world, where He was nailed to a stake; people humble in spirit, trustful in heart, unwavering in integrity and spotless in virtue. The nation without these is on its way to judgment, no matter what form the government, how large the domain, how vast the wealth, how gigantic the commerce, how multiplied the industries, or

how high the attainments in learning, in art, in oratory, in sanitary and social science and in literature. Let the nations of the earth tremble! Civilization is not Christianity, culture is not Christ, greatness is not grace, and self-confidence is no evidence of being established in righteousness and truth. God can smite the nations of to-day just as he did the proud, luxurious and cultured empires of Babylon, Niniveh and Egypt. The iron and clay of a constitutional monarchy as well as the clay and iron of a modern republic, may be ground to powder with as much of ease and certainty as the gold of an imperial autocracy. It is not far hence, in the dim and ominous future, when "the little stone" of prophecy will become the grinding mill of history. When everything of vain man's creation becomes as the chaff in the summer threshing floor, then the universal empire of God will fill the earth with its own glory "unto the Age of Ages."

In addition to the direct teachings of prophecy, the records of past history in the Bible point to a repetition of events in future history having the same characteristics and differing only in extent and intensity. The good and the bad run parallel and culminate

in a final crisis of rewards and punishments. The good and bad are separated each forever in his own place.

Here we see the two currents—progress and regress, repetition and expansion, like the advancing and retreating waves of the sea. This is the organic law of all prophecy, history and thought. It is both cyclical and horizontal. The law of the Ages is "that which hath been, is now; and that which is to be hath already been." Yet it is not an aimless, *pagan* roll of cycles. There will be a true *progress*, in which the present is the fullness of the past, and, at the same time, a firm basis for the future. There is an *end* in view. It is the grandest which the wisdom of God can conceive, and which the power of God can accomplish. When it is reached, it will be seen, that the introduction of evil into the world was part of a great plan for attaining the highest ends, possible by no other path. It will also be seen, that after all the struggle and conflict are past forever, the good has come at last to eternal victory.

The *road* to this end is indicated in the Scriptures. Here we see two distinct lines alternating in judgment and mercy, in cursing

and blessing. Adam and Seth; the flood and Noah; Babel and Abraham; Sodom and Lot; Egypt and Israel; Jerusalem and the Church, mark the successive steps of the judging hand of God accompanied by gracious intervention and deliverance. Prophecy points with uniform testimony to a repetition of these in the future, in a manner that is universal, final and terrific. All other judgments are but rehearsals of the final dramatic tragedy.

What solemn and awful events are predicted by our Lord, and by the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments! The tares and the wheat; the sheep and the goats; the Christ and the Antichrist; the Church resting and the the unbelieving writhing; the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven and the Old Babylon going down to hell; Christ exalted to be a Priest upon His throne; and the Dragon which is the Devil, bound, cast into the abyss, shut up and keyed in his prison. This is the broad outline of the final outcome now looming up before us.

Now there are three spheres of existence. There is one where there is good and only good without any mixture of evil. There is one where there is evil and only evil without

any mixture of good. Then there is the great sphere of human existence where good and evil, right and wrong struggle for the mastery. This enmity between the " seed of the woman" and the seed of the Serpent, between the Son of God and the great adversary the Devil,— this contest between light and darkness, between love and hatred, between life and death, will come to an end. Not merely by the exercise of divine power, but by their own inherent tendencies, the good will go to the good and the evil to its evil. Each will go to its own place, and when that place is reached in the final crisis, there is no promise of change or end, to the awful doom of the one and the sublime glory of the other. The thought is overwhelming in its solemnity, but the whole testimony of history and prophecy point, with unwavering certainty, to a doom, on the one hand, as dark and dreadful, as that of the other is filled with light and glory.

XVI.

THE USES OF THIS DOCTRINE.

Little more than the threshold of this wonderful theme has been entered. What has been said may afford a ground of vantage that will encourage others to larger excursions and more distinct and far-reaching conclusions.

It only remains that an attempt is made to answer the question *cui bono*? During the past thirteen centuries, little or nothing has been said of the Ages of the Scripture, and yet, much progress has been made. May we not have a continuation of growth, without attempting to understand "dispensation truth"?

Since the doctrine of the Ages fell out of sight after the fifth century, progress indeed has been made. Progress in what? First of all in the development, consolidation and spread of Romanism. There can be no doubt on this point. Progress, too, in systems of

government, in revolutions, reformations, modes of education, conquest of countries, bloody and heartless wars, discoveries, inventions and industries. Progress also in Protestantism, missions, toleration, religious liberty, latitudinarianism, apostacy and infidelity. Progress in the introduction of pagan philosophy into Christian theology, in the facility with which betrayers of Christian truth are installed into seats of Christian learning, and progress in art, literature, science, and the whole round of things that we call civilization. We have had progress also in grammars, lexicons, and auxilliaries to study, until our libraries are gorged with the accumulation of books.

But have we not had *regress* also? Leaving out of consideration the world, may we not trace, in the history of the Church, a lapse from the "first love" of Ephesus, to "the lukewarm" nausea of Laodecea, driving the Lord outside of the Church where He remains knocking at her door for admittance? True, there never was such a manifestation of zeal and self-denial since the Apostles as there is now; and there never was such indifference and self-indulgence. Extreme heat and extreme cold, producing a medium, lukewarm

temperature. There never was such a diffusion of education and general reading, but there never was a period of greater neglect and ignorance of the Word of God and the doctrines of grace. How few in our churches know anything at all of the coming, appearing and revelation—the parousia, epiphany, and apocalypse—of our Lord. The early Church understood these things and cherished the hopes which they inspired, but can as much be said of to-day?

Many of those, on whose lips modern progress constantly hangs, know nothing of the meaning of the Church, Kingdom, Body, Age and similar words of frequent recurrence in the New Testament. There are many pulpit orators and professors in Christian colleges, who are at home in history, science and philosophy, but who are all at sea when the simplest teachings of the Word of God are introduced. Modern scholarship, and science and literature, have advanced, but too often at the expense of Christian truth.

To ask what profit, means what is the use of considering anything in the Bible beyond what concerns one's own selfish salvation? Have the great prophesies of the Old Testa-

ment and the clearer utterances of the New been given for our own amusement? Are they not to be studied? Is not all Scripture, including prophesy, profitable for the man of God?

Is it not strange that men are willing to surround themselves with vague speculations about the Church of the future, and the religion of the twentieth century—speculations which, like the spider's web are spun out of their own bowels, and yet neglect and reject the "sure word of prophesy" which shines in the present darkness, and reveals the course and crisis of the future? What towering assurance, what baseless prophesies come from the Babel of religious teachers at the present day! And why? In some cases because of the narrowness of men's horizon—not a step beyond personal salvation. In more cases intellectual pride—unwillingness to bow to the Word of God. They had rather trust their own reason, and draw conclusions respecting the future from the past. It is intellectual pride instead of open minded humility. What period of the past has thrown any light upon the future? Who can tell what a day may bring forth in his own life, much less in the future of a nation or of

the world? What is the use of speculating about the future, when the weaving of a spider's web, or the stub of a man's toe, or the bite of a dog may be used by God, in the future as in the past, to upset the whole? Why not accept the forecastings of the One who alone can see the end, aye, and has planned the end, from the beginning?

Progress, and regress, too, we must admit. In running after modern fads, we have run behind ancient truths and attainments. The very errors that were crushed out by the Apostles are now boldly preached. Is this a kind of progress over which we ought to boast? The Old Testament is loaded with prophetic truth that modern scholarship never touches. The New Testament is full of instruction about the "Ages," "the end of the Ages," and the order of events, into which the Church never looks. Indeed, these things have been so buried in the rubbish of human devices and wild schemes of interpretation, that the voice of God is never heard by the ear of man. The Word of God was made void by the traditions of the Jews, at the time of Christ, and its teachings were destroyed by Rome until the Reformation. But are we now

freed from the traditions and superstitions of the past so that the Word of God is supreme in our thinking, in our feeling and in our living? Are we? Who dares to make such a claim? Man's boasted scholarship to day is more destructive to the Bible than the Jewish traditions of nineteen centuries ago.

It seems plain that we ought, at least, to attempt to make some progress in exploring these unknown portions of the Scriptures. Should not the circle of our theological knowledge extend beyond that of our fathers? Suppose Roman dogma and Protestant literature are silent on the doctrine of the Ages, what of it? Is Protestantism our source of authority? Are we indebted to Rome, or Wittenberg, or Geneva, or Oxford for our faith? Who is our Master? At whose feet do we sit? It smacks too much of rawness and recency to go back to Oxford or to Rome. We want something made more venerable by the maturity of age. We must go back to the dusty old manuscripts which reveal the teaching of the Apostles and the authority of Christ. Further still we must go, that we may include the *setting* of these precious truths. We must go back to those writings to which our Lord ever appealed as

inerrant, authoritative, lasting, and so knit together that they can never be broken. Back also to the history of the people from whom the Saviour sprung. Only when, with believing heart and open mind, with uncolored thought and unbent will, we turn to the fountain head —to that "faith once for all delivered to the saints"—and adjust our thinking to God's revelation, our faith to His self-interpreting word, and our work and hope to the plan of His "Ages" and the "End" toward which they march with unerring feet, can we reach the high plane of thinking, feeling and living, which is offered to our Christian ambition.

If, however, there is any human interpretation entitled to respect and to which we should defer in our interpretation of the Bible, it is that which was held by the martyr-scholars of the early period that might almost be said to have been taught by the Apostles themselves. It is well known that for the first three hundred years the Church held the martyr faith in harmony with dispensational truth, when it was unmoved by persecution, and when its members were strangers to any desire to escape tribulation. If we must appeal to human authority, let us go back to these

first days of comparative purity of faith and life, and let us never stop at the prejudices of Westminster, the compromises of Canterbury, or the corruptions of Rome.

XVII.

THE CONCLUSION.

It is not a matter of surprise that men have been slow to understand the onward movements of the hand of God behind the scenes, in the development of the Ages. Phenomena are more easily studied and understood than the unseen laws that govern them. Israel saw the "acts" of the Lord, but Moses understood His "way"—the reason of things. Israel's view was from without, but Moses was admitted to the counsels of Jehovah, who "made known His way"—His purpose and the principles on which He acted.

As we have seen, these Ages are amongst the things that are revealed. God has taken us into His confidence and made known His purpose respecting the Church, respecting Israel, and respecting the Nations during this Age. He has unfolded the greater glory of the Age to follow the one in which we live, and He has even given unmistakable revelations re-

specting the everlasting Age of glory succeeding that.

Our study of these Ages in their development reveals a four-fold law: 1. The Ages overlap. There is no sharp point at which the one ends and the other begins. You cannot mark a day or an hour when power passed from Jerusalem to Babylon, nor an hour when the Jew ceased to be recognized and the Church began. Jerusalem continued more than thirty years after Pentecost and her destruction under Titus is plainly predicted by our Lord in his discourse recorded in the twenty-first chapter of Luke. Jerusalem will recommence an existence at the end of this Age, and before the Church has gathered in the full number of the elect it will be in existence long enough to re-establish laws, customs, and worship according to the commands of Moses. It is evident that just as the instruction given in Luke xxi, respecting the surrounding of that city by armies *was of service then*, and none of the Christians perished, so shall the instruction given in Matthew xxiv, respecting "the abomination of desolation" guide the Christians in the future destruction, to flee for safety. Luke refers to the days of Titus

in the past, Matthew to the days of greater trouble in the future. It was "the day of vengeance" then, but in that hour to come "it shall be great tribulation such as hath not been from the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be."

2. God never destroys His previous work. He judges and sweeps from the scene whatever man has accomplished, but He always preserves the work of His own hands. The promise of salvation imbedded in the curse pronounced in Eden, is perpetuated in the new earth under Noah, and its fulfillment will crown the new heavens and the New Earth under Christ. The kernel of government given to Noah, has been preserved through all dispensations notwithstanding man's abuse of the trust. Even the law which only came in by the way "until the seed should come," remains holy and just and good—a revelation to the New Man although a source of death to the Old. The Gospel, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven which began with our Lord, will be continued in the Age to come. In a word, God never finds that He has built upon the wrong foundation or of the the wrong material. He never tears down

His barns to build larger—He builds them large enough at first. Step by step, in the onward advance of the Ages, whatever has come from God, has the stamp of His unchanging character. His foundation standeth sure.

3. In each Age there is first of all a gradual deterioration from the former condition of things. This declension continues and accelerates as the end of the Age approaches. Whatever irregular attempts at recovery may appear, they will be found to be the results of some external force or forces, and are never an evolution from within.

4. In each Age, the power of evil waxes stronger and stronger. In the end it makes a final and supreme effort to maintain itself against the incoming of a better state of things. The course and climax of the Mosaic Age is the type and mould of every Age. Man resisted, stoned and shamefully entreated the prophets. When God sent His Son they killed Him in the most shameful way known to history and sought to seize His inheritance. They descended from a rejection of the message to a hatred of the messenger, and then from that to the murder of the King from whom the message came.

5. There is also revealed the victory of the new or better Age, coming out of, and ruling over, the wreck and ruin of the Age preceding. This victory, in every case, is preceded by judgment and is led and accomplished by God in the person of His Son.

Thus, from the "unbeginning beginning" spoken of by John, we have reason to believe that the countless Ages have been unfolding their glories. But we know by revelation, that from the time of that other "beginning," when the heavens and the earth were created, the Ages have had their birth, their course and their death, according to the arrangement of God. So will our own Age come to its end, with a death struggle and agony that has never been equaled. In its last days it will be marked by the most subtle deceptions of Satan and by the most daring blasphemy of man ever seen in human history. It will be the combination of earth and hell to defeat the gracious purpose of God to bring in the better things of the Age to come. The Devil will have "great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."

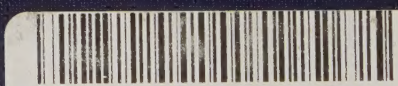
But all of the human and Satanic combinations will be in vain. "He that sitteth in the

heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." The Son shall be set " upon the holy hill of Zion," and " shall break them with a rod of iron." The " appearing of the great God and our Savior," will be an epoch, marking the end of Israel's blindness, of the Churches' suffering, of Satan's power, and also marking the beginning of the Millennial reign. The Old will die and will be put in its bloody coffin and then sunk into oblivion, while the New will be born and laid in its peaceful cradle. But the One who buries the Old, and brings forth the New, will sit on the throne and shall have " dominion under the whole heaven," and " from the River to the ends of the earth." " All kings shall fall down before Him and all nations shall serve Him. His name shall continue as long as the sun."

It is thus that God hath moulded the Ages of the past. Thus is He moulding the present, and thus will he mould the future. But whether in the past, the present, or the future Ages, it is the same everlasting God of light and love, the same gospel of grace, promising glory, the same Holy Spirit, the same Mediator and the same human race, either needing mercy or " having obtained mercy." The gospel has

not been a failure, it does not fail now, and it will not be a failure in the Age to come. It has accomplished, and it will accomplish the ends for which it is preached. In this Age it takes out a people from the nations. In the next, it will begin by "repairing the tent of David," in order that "all nations may seek after the Lord." And when the final Age is reached, redeemed man, the redeemed heavens and the redeemed earth, will attain a perfection leaving no wish or will of God himself ungratified, and when that long expected day has come, we will have no song of praise for man, for sociological reforms, for Church pretention or for good laws, but unto the Father and unto the Son and unto the Holy Spirit, unto the Ages of Ages, shall be glory and dominion and power. Amen.

GRACE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



23